

# MY PSYCHIC ADVENTURES

By

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## FOREWORD

I had thought that I had nothing to say under the above heading, but I find I have two things to say. The first is that, throughout the book, I have employed, without apology (but, I hope, with definition) the terminology of spiritualism and the seance room. We must have words for these things, and the words which I have adopted from my spiritistic friends are certainly as good as any others. My readers will understand that I use them without in any way committing myself to any particular beliefs.

In dealing with the details of my seances, I have in numerous instances displayed a severity which should not be carried over into my general estimate of the medium. Mrs. Leonard is perhaps the worst sufferer from this; I should

not wish the reader to feel that the sharpness with which I criticize certain features of this sitting characterizes my judgment of Mrs. Leonard as a medium. The same thing applies, in less degree, to Powell and "Mrs. X."

The final chapter of remarks and conclusions has been written under considerable pressure and great difficulty, during a very harrassing convalescence from a severe attack of influenza. I hope my readers will overlook its shortcomings, of which I am acutely conscious. In particular, I have made no effort to duplicate, in this chapter, the conclusions and semi-conclusions which are rather liberally scattered about through the text of previous chapters.

THE AUTHOR.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM OF PSYCHIC RESEARCH

**E**VERY one of the world's major religions pictures the departure from this life as merely the means of entry into a bigger and better existence, for which the life on earth is more or less definitely a period of preparation. With regard to the details of the system they naturally differ widely; with regard to the basic proposition that death is not the end they are in complete agreement. They must be so, in fact; for if we do not survive into a life after death, it is difficult to define the role of religion.

A further point on which all creeds have been in agreement has to do with the nature of the barrier between this life and the next. Always this has been pictured as an impenetrable veil. Communion of mortals with the actual deity or deities is permissible, and usually is frequent. But all return to earth by the dead, all visit by mortals to the realm of the dead, actual intercourse of any sort between the two spheres—when this is not denied positively, it is regarded as an altogether extraordinary departure, a miraculous intervention, a setting aside of divine rules by divine authority, which may occur once in a thousand years or once in ten thousand years, but which is so rare that when it does occur it constitutes an epoch.

I do not believe that it has ever been sufficiently emphasized, upon abstract philosophical grounds, that the religion which dates its origin from Hydesville, N. Y., in the middle of the nineteenth century, represents a fundamental departure from a universal standard. We have in spiritualism a religion whose cardinal principle consists in denial of the absolute character of the barrier between the present life and that to come. Under appropriate conditions, this religion teaches, the veil is pierced, and there is the freest imaginable intercourse between the dwellers in the two realms.

This religion has had its vicissitudes, like all other creeds. But up to ten years ago the general statement would have held that it had made very little impression upon the world as a whole. Aside from those who actually professed spiritualism, all intelligent and informed people knew of the creed, just as they knew of the Haytian voodoo-worship and the Hawaiian taboo system. But in 1913, the intelligent and informed people outside the spiritualist churches, and perhaps in them as well, would have laughed at the suggestion that this faith might ever become a topic of universal interest and discussion, so that the organized hierarchies would regard it as a menace and serious scientists would seek to learn what basis of fact lay behind its beliefs.

It is usual, among those who decry this situation, to attribute the present vogue of spiritism to a wave of post-war hysteria. Undoubtedly

this is in large part a valid explanation of the great increase in the spiritualistic ranks. But it is begging the question to condemn the creed on this ground. Had the later pagans possessed the word or the idea of hysteria, they would have found this jibe exactly applicable to the rise of Christianity. The psychological reasons why people are attracted to a thing are of interest only as a matter of psychology. As an indication of the inherent truth or falsity of spiritualism, the post-war-hysteria charge has exactly as much bearing as a squabble between two rival candidates for the papacy would have upon the validity of the immaculate conception.

The spirit faith and its rapid rise, however, appeal irresistibly to the inquiring mind. The differences of creed between the various orthodox Christian sects are comparatively trivial, and interest nobody save professional churchmen. But the prodigious gap dividing the spiritist doctrine of free communication between the two spheres of existence, and the concept of an impenetrable veil which orthodox Christianity shares with all older religions, must arrest the attention and command the interest of every intelligent person. Everybody *must* ask himself whether the new creed or the old is right on this fundamental question.

Now Christianity has many beliefs that the scientist might question. But usually the questioning may be forestalled by Christianity's frank admission that the things it believes to

have happened could not have happened, save by miraculous intervention of the deity; and by science's equally frank admission that this puts the matter entirely outside the domain of scientific investigation. But spiritualism cannot claim the same exemption. For it aims to set up material action by the departed upon the earthly plane as a normal thing. It pictures such action as a thing which needs only the right conditions, to bring it about with a certainty and regularity and subjection to natural law which at once put it within the realm of science.

So science must, and will, consider the validity of the assumptions that underlie spiritualism. And when science does this, when science asks the spiritualist why he believes that the dead survive and return and manifest themselves, the answer is a very direct one, and one with which science is peculiarly fitted to deal. This belief is held, the spiritualist tells us, because numerous phenomena are observed to occur, which are best accounted for by the assumption that disembodied personalities are at work, and that these personalities are those of actual human beings who have departed from this life.

If this claim is correct, science will ultimately accept what, for brevity, we refer to as *the spirit hypothesis*. But before it does so, science is bound to conduct a very exhaustive inquiry; and this inquiry will take several directions. First of all, science will ask, and seek to answer, the question:

I: Do the phenomena upon which spiritism is based occur, any of them or all of them?

If this could be answered with a categorical negative, the inquiry would be terminated. But it seems quite certain that, with reference to some of the phenomena at any rate, it must be answered in the affirmative. Having, then, answered it completely and satisfactorily, and determined just exactly what occurs and what does not occur outside the scope of known principles of science, there arises the question:

II: Under exactly what conditions do these heretofore unexplained and unrecognized phenomena take place?

When this has been dealt with, not necessarily to finality but at least with some degree of satisfaction, it is time to consider the attack upon a third, and last question:

III: What makes these things happen? What is their immediate cause, what if any are their more remote causes, what is their *modus operandi*? What must we say about them to put them on the same satisfactory basis of natural law with the manifestations of the electric current, so puzzling to an earlier generation?

The most significant feature of all this formulation is that we have not said a word about the spirits. From the scientific viewpoint, it would be quite incorrect for us to have done so. The spirits do not enter the matter at all until we have got down to the third phase of the investigation; and even then, they constitute but one

of the numerous hypotheses which the scientist will want to formulate, modify, shift about, consider from every angle, and ultimately accept or reject. One can—and, if one is scientific, one must—study the phenomena without any more reference to this particular explanation than to any other, without any word about spirits, without any thought of a religious side to the matter. And for the better definition of an examination of this character, a word has been created which ought to be subject to no ambiguity. This word is “psychic.” It should convey no suggestion of spirits, none of religious considerations. It should stand simply as an adjective applying to certain phenomena which, to such extent as they occur, fall outside the possibility of explanation through accepted scientific doctrine. Science is indebted to spiritualism for having brought these phenomena to its attention. Beyond that, it ought to be possible for us, following science’s lead, to talk of psychic phenomena, and conduct psychic research, with no thought of the spirits.

What happens, and why? That is all there is to psychic research.

## CHAPTER II

### SUBJECTIVE PHENOMENA AND THE HYPOTHESIS OF TELEPATHY

**W**HAT happens, and why? Before we ask this question, it is really necessary for us to know what is claimed to happen, and what reasons have been advanced to account for the observed or alleged phenomena. A general survey of the psychic field, giving us this information, is therefore in order here.

We find right at the start that the phenomena to which the term "psychic" has been applied are of two sorts, with a fairly distinct line of demarcation. On the one hand we have subjective occurrences whose whole sphere of action lies in the human consciousness, and which are devoid of demonstrable effect upon the external world or of visible connection with that world. On the other, and objective, side, we have the production of definitely "physical" effects by "supernormal" agencies. With regard to some of the items which I shall catalog in the former group, there is absolutely no question of occurrence—they are conceded to occur. With regard to all of them, the question of occurrence is far less serious than in the objective group—many persons who are hard-headed to the point of extreme offense in dealing with the physical phenomena of psychism, grant offhand the exist-

ence of subjective phenomena quite as remarkable as the objective ones which they so summarily reject.

The problem with the subjective or mental phenomena is rather that of deciding where normality ends and supernormality begins. For in the domain of psychology, the normal shades imperceptibly into the supernormal, and the latter often appears merely to be the former, extended or accentuated. We shall therefore not attempt this separation, but shall permit the normal to overflow into our discussion when it will.

The supernormal phenomenon whose existence will be least disputed by the hard-headed person who pooh-poohs the whole subject is hypnotism. Indeed, it is not to be asserted with certainty that this is supernormal. We are all more or less susceptible to suggestion. To any suggestion that comes to us we ordinarily apply the critical faculty. We inquire whether it is in line with our wishes, whether there is logical reason for or against it; so far as we are able we examine it on its merits. Perhaps the only difference between the hypnotized and the un-hypnotized person is that the ability of the former to do this is suspended. His ordinary cerebral associations inhibited, the hypnotic subject naturally and automatically responds to any suggestion put to him.

At the point where the operator acquires the necessary dominance over his subject this argu-

ment has been left blank; it tells what the hypnotist does but not how he does it. Here, if at all, the process is supernormal. But we all know persons whose suggestions carry great weight with us, and are ordinarily accepted. The hypnotist has simply found a way, whether "normal" or "supernormal" I leave to one versed in the actual technique, to make himself appear irresistibly in this light to his subject.

Closely parallel to hypnosis are numerous phenomena where the subject may be regarded as having hypnotized himself. The practice of crystal-gazing has been universal. Stripped of all hocus-pocus, it comes to this: A respectable percentage of humans find, on concentrating the gaze upon certain objects and striving to make the mind a blank, that pictures appear in the visual field. The object of the gaze may be a ball or crystal of glass, quartz, etc.; a bowl of water or anything else giving the impression of clearness and depth; a pool of ink, a slab of polished stone, a mirror, a finger-nail, etc.; even the empty hand sometimes suffices. A person either can induce these pictures, in which event he may discover the ability by accident; or else he cannot, in which case he may stare his eyes out and nothing will happen. This makes it easy for those who cannot see the pictures to discredit the whole business; but there can be no rational disbelief that the power exists as outlined. The pictures seen are of a wide variety; they may be stills, or action pictures.

A close analogy are the phantasies which many of us have when half awake. Probably more of us are subject to this than to crystal-gazing. With closed eyes, between sleep and waking, we see faces, landscapes, all manner of things. Much rarer, but undoubtedly genuine so far as its subjective character to the percipient is concerned, is the true hallucination of wide-awake consciousness. Occasionally auditory, this is usually visual. The apparition, ordinarily of a dear friend or relative, presents itself, lasts for an indeterminate period, and vanishes. It may be of a person known to be living or known to be dead; in either event it may present the appearance of life or of death. It may speak or be silent; it may remain motionless, move at random, or act a part. It is seldom, if ever, recognized as hallucination until it has passed—not always then.

As indicative not so much of the form as of the general nature and content of hallucinations, I may describe one of which a fairly well authenticated account comes to me. Mrs. X., wife of a seafaring man, was observed by several of her neighbors, standing in the doorway of her cottage in the little seaside village of Britain where she resided with her husband—when he was on land. At this moment he was at sea, en route to the home port, where he was expected within a few weeks. Suddenly the lady was observed to leave the doorway, hurry down the path and through the stile, and then to run across the

moor for perhaps a hundred yards. She stopped running and threw her arms out in front of her, swept them in toward her, and fell. When the watchers reached her she was unconscious. Revived from her faint, her first words were to the effect that John, her husband, was dead. Once again clothed in her right mind, she told a story that checked perfectly with her observed actions. She had seen her husband approaching across the moor. Without stopping to consider the physical impossibility of this, she had taken it for granted that he had made an unexpectedly early arrival. She had rushed out to meet him, had thrown her arms about him—and there was nothing there.

In due course news came along that, as far as could be determined, at the exact hour of this apparition, he had in fact been drowned.

I do not guarantee this tale, though I believe it to be true, and though there is no earthly reason why it should not be true. It is a model, as regards the general setting and circumstances, for a very large number of recorded cases where a visual or auditory hallucination of a friend or relative, or merely an intense feeling that the person in question was present, has been found to coincide with his death or with a moment of great stress in his life. It represents but one class of these phenomena, since as I have indicated above the object of the hallucination may be known to be already dead. Again, the hallucination may be just as clear as ever yet fail to

coincide with any crisis in the object's life.

The subjective mechanism of all this is simple enough. We have certain sense organs, with their lines of communication and their associated brain-areas which receive and interpret their messages. It is difficult to get away from the supposition that these circuits are electrical in nature. Ordinarily they are closed to the action of any other stimulus than the sort they are designed to receive. But it is far more difficult to imagine that this insulation is absolute, than to suppose that at times the circuit is subject to extraneous influence of some sort. And just as extraneous currents in a telephone circuit set up sound waves at the receiving diaphragm, it seems fairly inevitable that external currents in, say, the visual circuit must set up visual impressions at *their* receiving terminus. The character and intensity of the extraneous factor would presumably determine whether associative as well as perceptive centers would come into action, and accordingly whether the picture seen would be a more or less familiar one. The nature of the extraneous force acting would, of course, determine whether the phenomenon would have to be regarded as normal or as supernormal; of this we speak later.

Touching hypnotism from another angle is multiple personality. Most of my readers will know what this is. For those who do not, it may best be described as the apparent moving out, from its dwelling place in his physical body,

of the subject's personality, his ego, his identity; and the similar moving in of some other ego, some other personal identity. It must be emphasized that this invading personality is complete; it lacks absolutely nothing save, sometimes, a background of memory of the remoter past—a sort of blank wall being substituted.

Of all the things that happen to us humans, this really seems to me the most baffling, especially to one having a rather severely materialistic outlook upon biology, and regarding the mechanism of thought and action as a matter of mere physical forces, chemical reactions, and electrical stimuli. I should pardon anybody for asserting in the most categorical fashion that it cannot be, that multiple personality cannot happen. But—it happens. Indeed, one case is on record of a young lady who had as many as five different personal identities, which she slipped on and off like changing her shoes.

So far as I know, this condition is never induced, never in any way at the sufferer's command. It is strongly suggestive of the actual introduction or imposition from without of the extra personality, and the possession of the victim's physical and mental structure thereby. The fact that in authenticated cases there has ensued a struggle between the two identities for ultimate tenancy has been cited in behalf of this viewpoint. But in recent cases treatment of dual personality has taken the direction of a successful effort to aid the merging of the two

streams of consciousness; and this makes the phenomenon look more like a strictly subjective one. In any event, it is one whose occurrence absolutely cannot be disputed.

A special case of dual personality which will be of great interest to us is that of the mediumistic *trance*. It must be explained, first, that many sorts of psychic phenomena, both subjective and objective, occur, not spontaneously to a random subject, but through the more or less deliberate invitation by a person displaying extraordinary sensitivity in this direction. Whether objective or subjective, whether occurring actually to this sensitive, to some other person, or in free space outside any human shell, the actual physical presence of the sensitive or *medium* seems necessary—the obvious analogy being with the chemical catalyst, though nobody knows enough about the subject to say whether this analogy is a false one or a true one. And usually, mediumship occurs in a condition of trance. Occasionally this trance is like the hypnotic trance, a condition of apparent sleep or unconsciousness; but more often it takes the form, whether fictitiously or not it would be hasty to say, of possession of the medium's body by a personality from without. This personality claims to be that of some definite deceased human being, the fact of whose prior existence may be known to those present, may be unknown to them but verifiable, or may actually be beyond even this possibility. I think, in view of the

specific cases which I shall describe in later chapters, further general comment upon mediumship or trance will be superfluous; but the phenomenon must at least be mentioned in this place, to give it its proper setting.

The theory that an external intelligence is operating upon the corporeal rind of the victim of secondary personality is of course strongly supported by trance mediumship, provided only there were a valid way of proving that the medium's control is not a subconscious masquerade of his normal personality. An analogous remark will link up multiple personality and trance with automatic writing. In this, the subject takes a pencil in hand, puts it to paper—and, in the beginning usually with some hesitation or false start, but after practice with no preliminaries whatever, proceeds to write words, sentences or entire volumes about all sorts of things that are not consciously in his mind at all.

One watching the automatist at work would be quite unable, in most cases, to see any indication that the writing was not entirely conscious and normal. It is therefore evident that we have here a phenomenon lending itself to deception. Nothing is to be gained by ignoring this, or by denying that a good deal of alleged automatic writing is done consciously and deliberately and with fraudulent intent by the writer. Equally, however, nothing is to be gained by holding out against the fact that in a majority

of cases automatic writing is really automatic, without the operator's volition. It may occur when he is in a trânce, or when he is apparently normally awake. His attention may be on the writing, on something else, on nothing at all. He may be conscious of the message as it develops; of words as they are formed individually but not of the context; or of nothing at all in connection with the message.

Things completely forgotten may be recalled through automatic writing. Rarer but far from unique are cases where knowledge is presented by the automatic writer which it seems certain he could never have had. Persons of mediocre attainments display literary ability, or exhibit mastery of subjects with which they have plainly never been in contact. The penmanship is ordinarily that of the agent, but often a distinctive hand is adopted for these communications. Occasionally the same automatist will employ several of these, keeping them entirely apart.

Automatic writing takes several rather standard forms, as regards the nature and content of the text. With an automatist who writes often and fluently, the writing always claims to be directed by a deceased person. One standard form is for this deceased person to dictate to the hand of the automatist a complete text-book of psychic science, a complete revelation of the mysteries of this world and the world to come. Another phase, to which the most eminently respectable ladies are peculiarly prone to fall

victims, is the autobiography of a medieval roué, who employs his victim's pencil to describe all his unprintable escapades, and to gloat over them in the most fearfully obscene language. It is by no means unique to have the automatic script in a language with which the scribe is totally unacquainted. And so on.

With appropriate modifications to meet the different operating details, everything said of automatic writing will apply to oral communication, or automatic voice, or direct voice as it is usually called, from a medium who may or may not be in a trance. Even more universally than with the written script, such communications purport to come from the dead. We need not yet accept them as so coming unless we prefer them that way, but the fact that many of them are without fraud or volition on the part of the agent we must accept, if we are to give the matter open-minded consideration.

Though in its form of delivery it is often identical with one or the other of the two phenomena which I have just described, the "direct spirit message" occupies so large a place in the practice and the theory of the spiritist seance that I am impelled to give it specific recognition as a distinct phenomenon. In doing this, I separate the content of the message from the fact and manner of its delivery. In this fact and this manner, it may constitute automatic writing, or direct voice, or actually a physical phenomenon of various sort. In its content, it is a subjective

phenomenon of the medium's mind, and it requires to be discussed and explained as such.

Its form is usually simple enough. As suggested by the above remarks, the medium, with her own hand or her own voice or her own vocal mechanism speaking in a voice apparently not hers, or by means of some still more externalized technique, delivers a written or a spoken communication. This purports to come from some deceased person present in his own identity, and is addressed to one of the sitters.

To one witnessing this for the first time, of course, the conditions and the technique are not in the least impressive. The suggestion of fraud is so strong as to amount, in the absence of emotional reactions, to practical certainty. If I seize my pen and write a message and sign it Alexander the Great or John Jones, why should you believe that I have not composed and written it myself? If, in the bargain, the alleged message be of a wholly trivial character, having no relation to the identity of the communicant or of the sitter; if it be entirely appropriate as a message from any dead person whatever to any living one—the suggestion of fraud on the part of the medium is just so much the stronger.

Now in a very considerable proportion of the cases that occur the message is of just this character. "My darling—I am so happy to communicate with you—I am well and happy and watching over you—I see you every day and know all you do—it is very hard to communicate

with you—what joy it gives me to overcome the obstacles—I must go, but I shall come again.” Such a message may be genuine but there is no internal evidence to show its genuineness; and many “messages” are of precisely this character. There is no profit for anybody concerned in ignoring these facts.

Equally, however, there is no profit for the skeptic in ignoring certain other facts that are not so easily built into his structure of disbelief. In spite of the unimpressive technique involved in the use of the medium’s hand or mouth, there can be, as stressed above, no rational doubt that many mediums are genuine to the extent that the speaking and writing are done without their volition or even without their consciousness. Nor can there be any doubt that there exists a great bulk of “evidential” messages, which are by no means trivial or lacking in pertinence to the recipient and to the alleged communicant. Such messages are full of direct and indirect references to the relations existing between communicant and recipient during the former’s life. The wealth of detail and of specific incident is often staggering, and far beyond the possibility of being accounted for on any theory of guesswork or chance. One might as well try to deny Niagara or radio broadcasting as deny this. The thing occurs. The problem for science is to explain how there comes, upon the medium’s lips or upon his fingers, information which if subject only to normal means

of dissemination could not be known to him.

The first step toward answering this question lies in a generalization—in placing the direct message right back in the category from which we have but now sorted it out. Having done this, we may formulate the problem about in these terms. The picture seen in the crystal, in the waking dream, or as an outright hallucination; the extra personality that appears and vanishes; the message of pencil, planchette, or voice; are these mere phantasies without significance or do they represent a real message of some sort? The attempt to answer presents numerous difficulties; passing these over for the moment, it leads us at once to one further important psychic manifestation of the mind alone—telepathy.

We all know what this term covers—the passage of knowledge from one mind to another, in some undefined way of which we can only say that it is outside the ordinary channels of the sense impressions. We must all realize that this supplies a simple and straightforward explanation of the puzzling phenomena listed above—that its very name implies such an explanation, in fact. If telepathy occurs, we cannot avoid thinking of the external stimulus which comes to the mind of the recipient, nor can we avoid thinking of this stimulus in terms of force. This force may act only upon associative centers, in which event the recipient gets the message only as a dream, a "hunch," etc., etc.; or it may act

upon perception centers as well, as pictured on page 12, in which case we have the more externalized effect of the hallucination, etc.

Now this is all very well, as an explanation; but does it stand up? Does telepathy, itself, actually occur? The direct experimental evidence in its favor consists in part of trials in which direct transference of thoughts, images or sensations was attempted; in part of successful hypnotism at a distance, which fairly defies explanation on any other ground: and in some part of the very fact that thus is simply explained much that without telepathy must for the present stand unexplained. Without giving space to the experiments made, the precautions taken, etc., etc., it may be stated that the preponderance of evidence indicates the existence of some means of communication between two minds, quite outside of those that involve the ordinarily recognized senses. Some few persons seem to possess the power of transmitting or receiving more or less at will; with the large majority, either aspect of telepathy is spontaneous, when indeed it occurs at all. Definite suggestions as to the physical mechanism of telepathic communication are of less significance here than complete certainty regarding its bare existence or non-existence.

The present evidence is altogether in favor of its existence. Granting this existence, the bearing upon all we have said is so plain that I need go into no details to make it clear that we'

have available an explanation for all the phenomena mentioned above. It has been objected that if we attribute all these phenomena, without reserve, to telepathy, it seems necessary to grant that the telepathic faculty can search the minds of all the world and help itself to what it wants. But has not the difficulty been magnified?

F. W. H. Myers was the first to formulate, partly from normal and partly from supernormal phenomena, the idea of the subconscious mind, the subliminal self. In his hands the concept took later an unfortunate turn toward actual spiritualism. From this fate it has been rescued by other psychologists, and restored to at least controversial standing. Numerous differences of opinion naturally surround such a subject. Without regard to these, without intent to support the theory definitely in any way, we may set down its general features.

Our minds are dual. Everything that takes place above the level of consciousness can equally take place below. The subconscious element of the mind is in every respect as capable as the conscious—it takes charge, when necessary, of all the mind's functions. In many ways this duality is as pronounced as though we possessed two distinct personalities.

The subconscious is always "aware," if we may use the term, of everything that goes on in the conscious mind, of every impression that comes to the latter. In addition, it takes in

much that goes clean past the conscious mind without making any impression whatever.

The subconscious is always in complete contact with the conscious. Only at times and under exceptional conditions is the current reversed, so that the conscious can tap the subconscious. When these exceptional conditions are met, things that have been below the threshold rise above it, and we become conscious of them—perhaps for a second time after a forgetting, perhaps actually for the first time.

Extreme advocates are apt to claim that the subconscious *never* forgets. I do not find this as objectionable as it might at first glance appear; but it is not really necessary. It can be displaced by the wholly innocent hypothesis that the subconscious forgets with comparative rarity; in some respects, this might meet the observed facts of psychic phenomena—particularly their uncertainty—better than the alternative of infallible subconscious memory.

The subconscious mind would be the seat of the telepathic function, as regards both sending and receiving. Ordinarily, of course, we should be quite unaware of the process. Our subconscious minds may be ever accumulating a store of impressions received from other minds—received in some way that we understand as little as Archimedes would have understood a wireless concert, but of which we may hope we are on the path toward an understanding. And then, when conscious comes into contact with subcon-

scious—under conditions which in our present crude state of knowledge we need not even attempt to define—anything which is in the subconscious, anything which it has ever received and retained, may come up into consciousness.

If we may grant all these assumptions, we have a perfectly normal and scientific explanation for any “evidential” direct-message phenomena which my imagination is capable of picturing. For nothing that I ever knew is really lost if I can but establish contact with my subconscious half at the moment when I want to know it. And nothing which anybody else may ever have known can be *proved* to have been lost. Anything which was ever in any mind may have been passed on telepathically to another, and another, and another; and there is absolutely nothing to prevent it from turning up in your subconscious mind, or mine — and some day, when conditions are right, from rising above the threshold!

Now this fascinating hypothesis is not original with me. It has been put forward by numerous people, in one form or another, and criticized by numerous others. The burden of the criticism by those who are anxious to discredit the telepathic theory in the interests of the spirit hypothesis is, that in any such form as I have here given it, the telepathic hypothesis assumes far more than we know to be the truth. Of course it does; the man who invented it knew that better than anybody else.

But if we refrain, as the spiritists insist we should, from supporting telepathy by citing the messages which it might be used to explain, we must ask the spiritists to refrain, similarly, from citing these messages in support of the spirits which can be used to explain them. And then the spirit hypothesis is equally open to the criticism that it *is* a hypothesis.

More careful defenders of the spirits object to telepathy because they regard the hypothesis outlined above not as a single one, but as a series of hypotheses. They object that this series carries the telepathic process beyond the bounds where reason dictates that it ought to stop. My own feeling is diametrically opposed to this. If we once grant that there exists a process through which one mind may register on another without any communication through the normal channels at present known, it seems to me that the extensions as to distance, time, persistence, etc., which I have suggested are in every instance much more easily made than avoided. I see no point in this chain of hypotheses where we can logically be asked to stop, save before we begin or after we have gone clear through to the end.

## CHAPTER III

### PHYSICAL MEDIUMS AND PHYSICAL PHENOMENA

THE telepathic hypothesis, extended to the bitter end as I insist upon extending it if I am to make it at all, will account for all the subjective phenomena of psychism that call for serious consideration. So of course will the hypothesis that the dead survive and communicate, with all the attendant conditions and extensions which it is customary to graft upon this hypothesis in actual use. The possibility that some third theory giving equal satisfaction with these might be formulated seems so slight as to constitute hardly any complication at all. The choice between telepathy and the spirits, then, represents the major problem of psychic research, so far as we have got with it at this point. But there is far more to it than that.

The phenomena which we have heretofore called subjective may with equal accuracy be termed mental. Those which up to now we have reserved for later discussion as objective may with equal grace receive this discussion under the title physical. The slight shift of base involved in the substitution of these new terms for the old ones is convenient in what follows.

The mental phenomena which we have been discussing are not the only manifestations that are claimed to occur. The very first phenomena

in the history of spiritism were "spirit" raps—gentle tappings on the walls, floors, furniture, etc., of the Fox home in Hydesville, New York, which gave intelligent messages in an intelligent code. So far as they consisted in messages, so far as the content of these messages was concerned, they were mental phenomena. But unlike automatic writing and direct voice, they were at the same time material, physical, objective effects—whether produced through trickery by the mediums, or through the operation of some definite force outside the laws of ordinary physics as formulated and accepted by science, does not for the present matter. These are physical phenomena.

Though raps are the oldest and perhaps the best known items in this category, by no means do they exhaust it. Without any pretense that the list is complete, we may here set down a few of the things that are claimed, by believers in physical mediumship, to occur. The most important item is perhaps the movement of physical objects, without physical contact of any sort. This occurs more ordinarily with tables, but also with any other objects that happen to be present—not omitting people themselves. Also a large place is held in the average physical seance by the production of voices, either in a trumpet or in the open space of the room—in either event, and in general, at a point where there exists no human larynx. The rather formidable name of telekinesis has been coined for the one phe-

nomenon, the obvious one of independent voice is applied to the other.

Raps, on tables or walls or even in the air, and at random or employing an intelligent code, are perhaps but a simpler form of the same phenomenon had in the independent voice. A variety of telekinesis to which the special name of apport is given is the bringing into the room of objects from a relatively great distance.

Analogous in another direction to independent voice is independent writing. Occasionally done by a pencil or pen that moves independently in plain sight, this more often takes the form of slate-writing, in which the pencil, enclosed inside a double slate, cannot actually be observed at work.

Of recent years a prominent place has been taken by psychic lights, which are sufficiently described, for present purposes, by their name. Cold winds from the medium's person are an old, old story.

More or less tied up with a suggestion as to the *modus operandi* of all the other phenomena is the materialization, in which human faces or even complete figures are made to appear where no material object was or, apparently, is. The latest attempts to put the whole thing upon a scientific basis involve the concept of a curious, semi-material substance known as ectoplasm. This is supposed to be abstracted from the medium's person by the psychic operators, used for the physical purposes of the seance, and re-

turned to the medium's anatomy. Materializations are pictured as made of this ectoplasm, raps as from rods and voices as from artificial larynxes built up of it, etc., etc. And it is claimed that when given off by the medium, it is often visible in a manner that entitles us to regard it as a distinct phenomenon, *per se*.

All this is fairly old. A contribution of recent years, however, is the spirit photograph. Here, on a plate which has either been exposed in the usual fashion and then developed, or developed without ever having been passed through a camera, we have an extraneous image or several such images, which as far as normal photography is concerned have no right to be on the plate. Usually these are more or less distinctly in human form, but sometimes they are otherwise. The possibilities of elaborate fraud, difficult of detection, are greater here, however, than in any other of the physical phenomena of psychism.

These, then, are the sort of things that are claimed to occur in the presence of a physical medium. If they do occur, they suggest a more fruitful field of investigation than the subjective phenomena. The latter are so completely explained by either hypothesis of telepathy or spirits that it really seems doubtful whether, by examining them alone, we should ever be able to distinguish between those hypotheses. But telepathy cannot move tables, produce lights, cause articulate sounds, etc., etc. Moreover, there

seems much more hope of really isolating the cause of a physical phenomenon than that of something that occurs entirely within the medium's mind. If the physical phenomena of mediumship occur, by all means they are the point of attack for the researcher, though the spiritist regards them as of minor import.

But—do they occur? The average person, for some reason, does not balk at the idea of telepathy. He is quite ready to accept the possibility, even the certainty, of its occurrence. He will not deny the occurrence of anything, however startling, that can be explained through telepathy. The only difference that I find between the individual members of a crowd on this question lies in the extent to which they realize that telepathy itself is but a word covering our ignorance, and the degree to which they realize that its occurrence is not yet a matter of scientific proof to the same extent that gravitation and electricity are proved.

But the average person, by virtue of this very willingness to accept telepathy as a known fact, makes the error of thinking, in terms of telepathy, of all psychic forces that may be demonstrated or assumed to exist. When you talk to him of psychic forces that may be capable of lifting tables and producing sounds in thin air, he thinks of telepathy that is able to do these things, and his sense of the fitness of things is at once, and quite naturally, offended. He says he doesn't believe that psychic forces exist that

can produce material effects of this character; when, if he were a better analyst of his thoughts, he would realize that what he means is that he doesn't believe telepathy can do such things.

On top of this, the average person has seen the stage magician at work. Seeing the finished performance of extracting rabbits from silk hats and making beautiful ladies vanish into thin air, he fails to visualize the contribution made by the performer's isolation on the distant stage, fails to estimate the degree of elaborate preparation and special apparatus necessary for the trick, fails to make proper allowance for the part played by the performer's confederates, in the audience and in the space back-stage. He therefore gets an exaggerated idea of the wonders of sleight of hand, and is far too ready to fall back upon this as an explanation of any physical effect that falls outside the domain of accepted scientific doctrine. An "unknown force," he needs to be reminded, is not an absurdity on its face.

This disposition, natural enough to begin with, to attribute mysterious physical effects to the magician's technique, is fed by the conditions under which the average "seance" is held. The psychic forces, we are told, do not thrive in light; they do not thrive when the medium is subjected to restraint of any sort; they do not even thrive in an atmosphere of hostility. Every one of these items is just the sort of restriction under which detection of trickery would be more diffi-

cult. So the physical phenomena of psychism have come under a cloud that does not obscure the mental ones, and the very serious question has been raised, whether physical effects of a supernormal character ever occur, independently of fraudulent mediumship.

This question, as I have indicated just above, at the present moment holds the key to the psychic science of the future. It must be answered, I am convinced, before we can go further. And it must be answered in a way that will carry conviction to all save the very most rabid partisans of the side against which the issue goes. Its difficulty can be visualized only by examining the serious documents that have been put out in support of both sides. Both are of such nature that, taken of themselves, it seems quite out of the question to reject them. Yet one side is necessarily wrong. That is the *impasse* to which psychic research has come.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN AND PSYCHIC RESEARCH

**R**EALIZING that the controversy to which the last chapter led up revolved about a question of scientific fact which put the matter distinctly in its field, and feeling that a definite answer ought to be attainable, the *Scientific American* early in 1922 began a systematic effort to dig out the truth for presentation to its readers. But the testimony was so conflicting that the editors found themselves unable to judge what were the facts; and at the same time mediums were so few and so inaccessible that we did not see just how we should be able to make a serious effort to learn the facts at first hand. A way out of this dilemma was sought in the publication of representative statements from both sides. This worked well for a time, until it became apparent that each side was stating, as facts, things which the other side insisted were very questionable opinions.

The climax came with an article by one James Black, of Montreal. Presenting good credentials as an honest, experienced and competent investigator, this gentleman contributed two very caustic articles, attacking the entire body of physical phenomena as fraudulent. Recognizing these articles as the statement of an extreme

viewpoint, the *Scientific American* nevertheless printed them, supposing them to be a fair and proper statement of that viewpoint. It was immediately brought to our attention, however, that he had misquoted and distorted authorities, put his own opinions quite arbitrarily into the mouths of those whom he cited, and in general turned out a highly objectionable document. His statements were so entirely wide of the facts as to demand an extensive article from my hand in retraction. The only thing that could be said for Mr. Black's articles was that they represented his sincere convictions.

This incident made it clear to us that we should never get anywhere by letting the two sides fight it out in our columns. Presented with the alternative of dropping the subject or finding some other way of handling it effectively, we decided in spite of the obvious difficulties to go into actual psychical research on our own hook. Another volume will ultimately appear, giving the results of this research. I need therefore say no more here than that we announced a comprehensive scheme of investigation, with every provision to insure both the cooperation of the mediums, and the public acceptance of whatever our verdict might be. As I write in late July this investigation is still in progress—will, in fact, run for many months.

Among those to contribute their protests against Mr. Black's misstatements had been Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Indeed, it was in large

part in response to an implied challenge in his letter, to look into the matter at first hand, that we reached the decision outlined above. This led to an extensive interchange of letters, to Sir Arthur's keen interest in our work, and to his prompt expression of a desire to aid us in every way possible. He, more than any other person among the avowed spiritualists, was thoroughly impressed from the start with the propriety and good intent of what his coreligionists were prone to regard as an interference from without. It was largely through his efforts that the prejudices of the psychics against such an "outside" investigation as ours were overcome.

Our investigation was explicitly one of phenomena, rather than of mediums, and it explicitly disclaimed any religious interest whatever, or any connection with the question of spirit survival save as this question might obtrude itself upon our attention. We confined ourselves to the one problem, already seen to be the major issue, of the occurrence of the physical phenomena. If we found that they occur, we promised to attack the question of their cause and *modus operandi*, but we made no promises that we should reach a conclusion here. The one question which we pledged ourselves to answer to our best ability was: Do the physical phenomena of the seance room occur in good faith in any instance?

From time to time we had letters from Sir Arthur, calling our attention to specific me-

diums, suggesting what to do and what to avoid, and in general giving us a much clearer view of the case from the psychic side than we should otherwise have had. Finally there came a note in which he said:

"It has struck me what an excellent thing it would be if you chose some reliable American now in London to represent you, and to see what I might be able to help him to. His report could at least furnish an appendix to the American one. If he were a man of the right type I would bring him in touch with the right mediums here, and he could run over to Paris and see Dr. Geley, and possibly to Munich to see Schrenck Notzing's medium Willy, who has converted some very hopeless cases. With these additions your report would take a wider sweep than any of your predecessors. If you named such a man, I would make it my business to get in touch with him, and get him sittings."

On discussion in editorial conference, our staff was unanimously opposed to placing a mission of this character in the hands of anyone not thoroughly known to us. At the same time, in the interests of British spiritualism and British mediums, we felt that the program ought to be carried out, if at all, by some person not in any way subject to review in our editorial office. So we offered to pursue Sir Arthur's suggestion, with the modification that I myself would go to England for a few weeks, leaving it to him to arrange a schedule for me. Also, we emphasized

in our reply that this tour and its report, undertaken by a single person of no very special qualifications to pass on the scientific side of the case, and subject to all the unsatisfactory conditions of observation of the ordinary routine seance, would necessarily have to be handled in such a way as to stand apart from our Committee's work and report in America. A supplement to the Committee's report mine might and would be, but in no event anything more. That we should feel this way about it was anticipated by Sir Arthur, and the suggestion that I come over myself he accepted enthusiastically.

It was agreed that if they knew who I was, the mediums would quite likely suffer greatly from the auto-suggestion that my presence was a hostile one, or at least a hyper-critical one. So it was arranged that Sir Arthur should present me, in all mediumistic circles, merely as an American friend and correspondent, who had come over to witness British mediumship at first hand. The only persons who knew me for a member of the *Scientific American* staff were Sir Arthur and Lady Doyle, the editors of *Light*, and, ultimately, Mr. McKenzie.

From the *Scientific American* viewpoint, the objects of the trip were to give me the opportunity to acquire, by direct experience under the most favorable circumstances possible, a general knowledge of the sort of things that occur in the seance room, the degree to which and the manner in which and the conditions under which

they occur; to come in contact with the spiritualistic viewpoint toward the phenomena and the spiritualistic philosophy; to get acquainted with European mediums whom we might ultimately wish to invite to America to work with our Committee; and to see just what methods and apparatus were being used in Europe in the serious scientific examination of mediumship.

I sailed on the *Noordam* on February 10th, and arrived in London, via Boulogne, on the 20th. I remained in or near London, until March 13th. On this date I left England for a swing about the continent which was to take me to Paris, Berlin and Munich, and from which I got back to London on March 26th. On the 28th I sailed for America again, having with me on the *Olympic* Sir Arthur, on a lecture tour of our western states, with his family. My time while in London was so completely taken up by the mission on which I went that I saw St. Paul's Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament only from the outside—and the Tower and the British Museum not at all! This book, from this point on, is the story of my experiences during the trip and after my return.

## CHAPTER V

### MEDIUMS AND OTHER FOLK OF PSYCHIC NOTE

**T**HREE will be less interruption in the account of my seances if I dismiss, in advance, my *dramatis personae*. First, then, a word about the British College of Psychic Science, and its dominant spirits, Mr. Hewatt McKenzie and Mrs. McKenzie.

Organized spiritualism occupies more the center of the stage in London than in New York; and one reason for this is a biting controversy between the believers whom I have grouped under that term, and the investigators of the British Society for Psychical Research. Into the merits of this controversy I do not need to go; suffice it to say that the spiritualists feel the researchers to be altogether too cold-blooded, too brutal in their treatment of mediums, and too severe by far in their demands as regards conditions and proofs. The matter has come to the point where the spiritualists, and the mediums who give sittings with a religious turn, will have nothing to do with the S. P. R. One feature of the schism is that the believers have set up their own research bodies. The Society for the Study of Supernormal Pictures is one of these, whose very name, indicating as it does acceptance of these phenomena, accentuates the different viewpoint. Another, and the most im-

portant, is the British College of Psychic Science. "The aim of the College is not to inquire whether life continues beyond death, but to demonstrate that it does"—so reads their prospectus. A rather large building, evidently originally an elaborate residence, is occupied at 59 Holland Park; and in many ways the College is the center of spiritualistic activity in London. It is emphatically the headquarters for seances.

The McKenzies, so far as is visible to the eye, run the College. Mr. McKenzie wears the title of Principal, Mrs. McKenzie that of Secretary. Mr. McKenzie is a man of business, with some resources. The College has its endowment funds, its donations and its fees; but I am given to understand that there is usually a moderate deficit, which Mr. McKenzie is usually forced to make good out of his personal funds. The casual observer might be pardoned for the assumption that the College is a personal speculation on the part of the McKenzies, since they make their living quarters there; but the fact is, accurate accounts are kept, and all other properties are observed. But every undertaking of this sort needs an active head, whose personality dominates the entire institution; and in the British College of Psychic Science this need is met by Mrs. McKenzie, and, in less measure, her husband. It is with them that one deals in dealing with the College.

Next to the College, the headquarters of spiritualism in London is at the building in Queen

Square, off Southampton Row, that houses the London Spiritualistic Alliance and the weekly spiritualist paper, *Light*. The Alliance maintains a reading room, gives frequent lectures, etc., in its auditorium, and indulges in all the other activities which one might associate with its name. *Light*, with editorial offices upstairs, is on a much higher level than our American spiritualistic papers, edited by two really able men, Mr. David Gow and Mr. Harry Engholm.

So much for organizations and leaders—I have not here listed Sir Arthur, whose place in the spiritualistic movement needs no explanation. Of the British mediums whom I met, Mr. John Sloan of Glasgow will come first, chronologically. He is a short, stoop-shouldered Scot, of frail appearance. He is decidedly taciturn; when he speaks, one notices the Scotch bur. He is extremely shy, in manner, in speech, and even in bearing; his whole presence suggests apology for his very existence. In every way he seems commonplace; he is certainly of little education—though he can write a decent letter—and I should judge his intelligence to be comfortably below the mean.

He has all the stubbornness that is supposed to go with his nationality, and in his case it revolves mostly about the fixed idea that he must not, under any circumstances, take money for his mediumship. He has been a resident of Glasgow for some years, earning his daily bread by common labor and giving semi-private

seances, more or less to the same group of regulars. During the war his wages mounted as high as seventy shillings; during the post-war slump they went as low as fifty. This wage was his sole support, his seances bringing no financial return.

His mediumship came to the attention of Sir Arthur, Mr. McKenzie and others, and on numerous occasions they went to Glasgow to sit with him. They were so well pleased that they made efforts to have him come to London and sit regularly for the College. This proposal was distasteful to him, for he feared with an unreasoning fear the strange environment and the bigger city, and he looked with suspicion upon the employment that was offered him in London, feeling that it was only a cloak for paying him for his mediumistic services. It seems to be the accepted idea that he never would have come to London had it not been for a bad domestic smash-up that came into his life. As a result of this, he accepted the transfer, hoping to feel more at peace with the world in new surroundings; but in this he was disappointed, for he was quite as unsettled mentally in London as he had been just previously in Glasgow.

Employment was found for him in a London garage, at a wage of ninety shillings, with an extra pound per week laid aside for him as a fund against sickness or other need. The unemployment situation in London was acute at this time, and the garage job must have been

endowed, in part at least, by the McKenzies or the College; to what extent this was the case, I do not know. So far as Mr. Sloan's reactions toward it were concerned, his work consisted in wheeling wheelbarrows all day long. He sensed that he was getting more money than the job was worth, and it distressed him greatly. In the bargain, lacking the physique for hard manual labor, but without the mentality for anything else, he would be quite exhausted by the day's work. He would come to the College to keep his dates, in no condition to sit; but he would insist upon sitting, explaining that the seances did not tire him, it was trucking heavy wheelbarrows all day long that did him in. But though he could perfectly well have laid off to recuperate, or have quit the job early on his seance nights, he was not willing to do this, because of the ever-present specter of commercializing his gift. The feeling that he was doing this anyway, his physical fatigue, his dissatisfaction with his work and with his living quarters and with London as such and everything in it, and his condition of extreme mental disorganization, all combined to make him an extraordinarily difficult person to deal with. I found his personality more interesting than of any other medium, despite his mental inferiority.

The sum total of my impressions was that he was probably incapable, mentally, of conscious fraud on a scale sufficient to account for his manifestations; and that if given the capacity,

there seemed no earthly way of explaining the motivation of such fraud. Indeed, he got so much mental anguish out of his dealings with the College and its money, that he seemed actually to have a motive for not being a medium!

So much for Mr. Sloan. My next character, Mr. Evan Powell, is totally different. He is Welsh, having started life as a coal miner, and progressed to the dignity of a small local merchant. His residence and business quarters are somewhere in Wales; and at regular though rather wide intervals he runs up to London to give a seance or two at the British College. The London spiritists are apt to tell you emphatically that this, that or the other medium does not get any money for his work. These statements are true in principle rather than in detail. I am sure there is no intent to deceive, but facts are facts, and these good people should restrain their enthusiasm. The fact is, Mrs. McKenzie over her signature assures me that Mr. Powell "has a handsome fee for his seances" at the College; "but then, he relinquishes his business for a week each month to be with us," so that the propriety of his having a generous fee is obvious.

Mr. Powell's personality is quite different from that of Mr. Sloan. He lacks wholly the Scotchman's inferiority complex, associating with one on a footing of equality, and giving one much more the impression of having had social contact with him. He is one medium

whose temperament defies the use of the adjective "queer." He seems entirely normal when not in trance. His education is probably no better than it should be, but he is a man of intelligence and of good interests. He discusses his own phenomena and those of other mediums, and displays much the same sort of interest in and grasp of the subject that would be expected of any reasonably well-read person.

Now this estimate works both ways. One may feel even more strongly in Powell's presence than in Sloan's that the medium lacks any quirk of mentality that would make him willing to indulge in the elaborate fraud that would be necessary in the attempt to produce his phenomena through sleight of hand; but in the case of Powell, one cannot say that the medium would be incapable of putting this fraud into execution. I am quite confident that, if Powell's performance can be done by trickery, Powell would be able to master the tricks, so far as mental grasp of them is concerned. Of course whether he would be able to develop the necessary manual dexterity is quite beyond guessing.

Among clairvoyant mediums, who see things and tell one things without any attempt to produce physical phenomena, first place in Great Britain if not in the entire world would doubtless be conceded to belong to Mrs. Osborne Leonard. She is the medium in the famous Drayton Thomas book and newspaper tests. In view of the rather unsatisfactory character of my own

sitting with her, as reported in Chapter VIII, I think it pertinent to insist upon the very surprising character and obvious good faith of the Thomas sittings.

C. Drayton Thomas is a clergyman, of what denomination I do not know, but sufficiently advanced in his profession to carry the title of Reverend. His father is dead. He sits with Mrs. Leonard regularly, and has done so for several years. At first he got messages from his father, delivered through the control Feda just as in my seance. Ultimately, his father "acquired the ability to come through without the aid of the control, and now when Mr. Thomas sits the old gentleman talks to him direct, out of Mrs. Leonard's mouth."

The messages are all of the same type, which is neither a religious nor a "helpful" one, but one aimed wholly at convincing Mr. Thomas that his father is really doing the communicating. They are all in quite the same form. A characteristic one would be something like this:

"In tomorrow morning's *Times* (*London Times*, of course), on page 8, column 5, about six inches up from the bottom, you will find a name which will recall intimate associations of your youth, between the ages of 16 and 18."

Mr. Thomas has been holding sittings and getting these messages for a long time. Usually they refer to the *Times*; always then to the morrow's paper, which is in process of composition and make-up at the time of the sitting.

Not all of them are verified; but similar messages have been made up at random, and their results compared with those of the statements delivered through Mrs. Leonard. The percentage of complete hits and the percentage of partial hits are both many times more in the genuine than in the fabricated messages.

Now any fair-minded critic, examining the evidence in this case, will be forced to grant that Mrs. Leonard possesses powers of some sort. In view of the exclusive use of an issue of the paper that is actually in the composing room at the moment, or, in other tests, of a book that is actually in print, it seems quite unnecessary, and indeed quite wide of the mark, to attribute any actual divination of the future to the medium or to the controlling intelligences. Whether by virtue of her own telepathic faculty, or actually through the seeing eye of Mr. Thomas' father, it seems necessary to grant that the office of the *Times* is somehow invaded and information gleaned about the coming issue. The presence of Mr. Thomas makes it easy enough, on the modest basis of telepathy, to see how information of his past life may find its way into the medium's subconscious centers; the same information, of course, his father would possess. Whether the telepathic faculty is able to conduct a simultaneous search of Mr. Thomas' fund of recollections and of the *Times* composing room, and correlate names found in both places, might be questioned.

The lady herself is very agreeable to meet. She is a bit on the slender side, and quite good looking. There is no suggestion of anything queer or abnormal, unless an occasional hint of childishness in her facial expression be such. Her age must be about that of passage into the period during which birthdays are conveniently forgotten. She charges thirty shillings for a sitting, and held in her own home as this is, all the money necessarily goes to her. She has a full schedule, and must do very well financially with her mediumship. I did not see her out of trance long enough to form any impression as to her ability or willingness to invent Feda and all the rest of it.

Mr. William Hope probably needs introduction less than any other of the mediums with whom I sat. He is *the* photographic medium of England—of the world, for that matter. Originally a carpenter, he states that he discovered his mediumistic ability by accident, a picture which he had taken of a group of fellow workers showing, when it was developed, the face of a recently deceased member of the crowd, as well as those present in the flesh. He works at his home in Crewe, and also at the British College. When you go to him at Crewe, he charges four and eight pence, or some such figure, for a sitting. This curious impost has been determined by Hope on the basis of his trade as a carpenter, which he still follows. He has estimated the time consumed by a photographic seance, and

the amount that he could earn in this time at the bench.

Knowing this, the British spiritualist is apt to tell you that Hope does not profit by his mediumship. The facts are not quite so simple. Those who go down to Crewe to sit with him usually give him a guinea or half a guinea, and insist on having no change. Moreover, when he comes up to London he leaves his trade for some days at a time, and a different arrangement is therefore quite necessary. So the College pays all his expenses of travel, and adds several pounds as a personal honorarium, according to the length of his stay. The same applies to his assistant, Mrs. Buxton, for the London sittings; what arrangement is made on her behalf at Crewe I do not know. London sitters pay the College thirty shillings or two guineas.

Hope is only half a medium. The other half is Mrs. Buxton. They will tell you that neither can produce a psychic photograph in the absence of the other. On general principles this is obviously objectionable and suspicious. But the technique of the sitting turns out to be such that Mrs. Buxton could hardly commit any fraud which Hope sitting alone could not equally well perpetrate. The investigator suffers from division of his attention between the two, but beyond this I do not see that Mrs. Buxton's presence can have any bearing upon the genuineness of the results.

Hope, as I have said, is a carpenter. In ap-

pearance he is that—or worse. Mrs. Buxton impresses one as even lower in the scale of social position and intelligence. One other of the prominent British photographic mediums, Mrs. Deane, is a charwoman; if Mrs. Buxton were put on her knees before a bucket of soap-suds, she too would look the part. With no other medium did it seem more the case than with them, that the ability to conduct elaborate fraud with success was entirely absent.

Dr. F. Schwab of Berlin is a practicing physician. I do not know just how he came in contact with Frau Vollhardt's mediumship—presumably she was a patient. She is now entirely in his control; to deal with her one must deal with him. It was through Dr. Alfred Gradenwitz, Berlin correspondent for the *Scientific American*, that I met them. I sat in Dr. Gradenwitz's study while he conducted negotiations with Dr. Schwab by telephone, looking toward my sitting with Frau Vollhardt, and I must say that I was unfavorably impressed. Dr. Schwab had prepared a manuscript describing his investigation of the medium, and as a preliminary to permitting me to sit, he wanted me to undertake, without having seen it, to buy it and publish it in the *Scientific American*. Dr. Gradenwitz finally impressed upon him the absurdity of this idea, and he ultimately agreed to take a moderate seance fee, which would apply against the article if we should use the latter. When the manuscript came to my hotel next

morning, it was by no means as bad as the attempt to force it upon me had led me to expect. And when I met Dr. Schwab himself, he was by no means as bad as his conduct had led me to expect. The professional class in Germany is having a tough time, and their efforts to get a few dollars out of any American with whom they come in contact are easily excused.

Dr. Schwab I found to be comparatively young, quite clean cut, and a very pleasant person to meet. If there is any skullduggery being done, he is a victim and not an accomplice, of that I am sure. The medium herself turned out to be a rather ordinary person, elderly and quite stout. I should think her very far from possessing either the intelligence to think up a fraud, or the ingenuity to shift from one base to another which has been shown in her psychic career. She impressed me as decidedly heavy both in body and in mind. Her daughter was a different proposition; she would be the seat of any fraud that may mark this circle.

Miss Ada M. Besinnet, of Toledo, Ohio, is the leading physical medium of America. In her case I must say, as in Powell's, that the medium is certainly capable, mentally, of devising and carrying through an elaborate fraud. These two are by all means the most intelligent of the mediums with whom I have sat, and in dealing with both, the probabilities of fraud are shifted from the ground of intelligence to that of character. I have reasonably convincing tes-

timony to Miss Besinnet's general uprightness, from old friends and neighbors—all people who ought to command attention and credit when they give character testimony. My own impressions were neutral.

Miss Besinnet has sat before at least three more or less formal investigating bodies. The most competent of these was that engineered by the late Prof. Hyslop; he reported that she did the phenomena herself, but while in a hysterical state of secondary personality and without the slightest degree of moral responsibility in her own person for the fraud. Mr. McKenzie, introduced to my readers above, had her in London for some months during which she gave both routine and test séances. He got out a report on what he presented as his scientific investigation, but what on its face was merely a search for things in which he might believe. Even the British spiritualists, while accepting all that he says, do not regard his report as a scientific document. The third examination to which I refer led to no printed report, but at least one of the investigators was convinced that her work was fraudulent. This investigator is charged by spiritualists—on other and more general grounds—with a lack of open-mindedness. I should certainly think that if she does the manifestations herself, Hyslop's explanation were the probable one.

In Miss Besinnet's case as in that of so many British mediums, over-zealous friends are too

prone to minimize the financial side of the matter. The fact is, the lady has no visible means of support other than her seances, and while I know of sittings for which she has received either nothing at all, or merely travelling expenses, I know of other sittings and series of sittings for which she has been very well paid. A very particular friend of the medium has written to me in a way suggesting that she averages, first and last, something like thirty-five dollars per week, which I think pretty good pay. I do not, however, regard it, or even a higher return, as necessarily evidence of fraud. Even a medium must live, and it seems to me that he, or she, is just as much entitled to a fair living wage as a minister or a doctor.

Condemnation of a medium on the mere ground that money is passed at his sittings I consider the height of hypocrisy on the part of the critic. But the financial status of a medium *is* of interest in considering all the pros and cons, so in this as in other cases I tell what I know under this head.

## CHAPTER VI

### MY FIRST SEANCE

I NSTEAD of reaching London on Monday, February 19th., as scheduled, I arrived at midnight on Wednesday, via Boulogne. Sir Arthur had left town on a brief speaking tour; and, having got in a bit of a funk over my continued non-appearance, he had cancelled my engagements for the week. With the aid of Mr. Engholm one of these was re-established; so my campaign opened with seances on Friday the 23rd. and Tuesday the 27th., with Mr. Sloan. Both these dates were among Mr. Sloan's regular engagements at the College, and not at all special sittings arranged for my benefit.

There were twelve present including the medium at Friday evening's gathering. Mr. McKenzie, who acted as master of ceremonies to the extent that the occasion demanded one, is the only sitter whom it is necessary to name. Though he had had correspondence with me as Associate Editor of the *Scientific American*, he had not been informed that I was the same Bird, and had not connected me up. To nobody else was I introduced as other than Mr. Bird, a friend of Sir Arthur's from the States.

The medium expressed a desire to shake hands all around. Some of the sitters he knew by name, others not. I was introduced not even

by name, but simply as Sir Arthur's friend, no mention being made of my nationality. So far as Sir Arthur and the McKenzies were aware, nothing had been said in the medium's presence indicating my coming, or my origin.

The seance room was rather longer than wide; in the center of one of the long sides, two pillars stood out several feet from the wall. These were so equipped with curtains that the space between them and the wall could be cut off from the rest of the room for use as a "cabinet." Mr. Sloan, however, is not a cabinet medium; so the curtains were furled, and the bare bones of the cabinet stood there, just like the mantel or any other of the furniture. The medium sat in the open circle with the others, his place being directly in front of the cabinet space, but apparently out of reach of the furled curtains. In any event, there seemed no stage of the seance in which the cabinet might have played a rôle.

A central chandelier carried a group of white lights, and a single red bulb. These were controlled from a switchboard in the corner of the room, to which one of the ladies had to go whenever a change of lighting was desired, leaving her seat and crossing the room outside the circle. Opposite the cabinet space was a fireplace, with a dull fire burning in it; and at the end remote from the door stood a small cottage organ.

The medium brought in with him a long collapsible tin horn of two sections—the "trumpet." It, and all the furniture and fixtures of

the room, were mine to examine as critically as I desired. There was nothing to report here.

The sitters were assigned places around the circle (see page 83) ladies and gentlemen alternating as is usual when numerical equality of the sexes permits. For the moment, a place was merely reserved for the medium; he was at the organ. Suggestions were asked for regarding hymns. "Lead, Kindly Light," "Onward, Christian Soldiers," and a third which I did not recognize, were named and sung. The general effect of the singing was extremely perfunctory; whatever its reaction upon the medium, it could have had none of any importance upon the sitters. This is a point that should be stressed, since it is customary to picture a seance circle as worked up to a high pitch of fervor by the songs.

The medium, though he is no musician, has apparently learned a few of the hymns by rote, and made shift to accompany them on the organ. After the three that I have mentioned were finished, he became very restless. He arose and resumed his seat repeatedly, rubbed his hands together loudly, and emitted a series of noises that I was not able to catalog. They might have been just weird sounds, and they might have been incoherent jabbering in Scotch dialect. Presently he attacked the organ again, without getting anything resembling a tune out of it; then he wandered about some more; and finally he made his rather blundering way to

the seat in the circle that awaited him. This was the signal that his "control," White Feather, had taken possession.

The "control" is a standardized feature of practically all seances. According to the spirit doctrine, he is a deceased person who comes to the seance and takes charge from the other side. The general idea is that on the other side as on this, communication presents great difficulties; and that, just as we have only our few mediums through whom it can be done, so the departed have only their few mediums through whom it can be done. For the sake of clarity, the medium on the other side is called the control. Spirits flock to the room to communicate with the people, just as people flock there to communicate with the spirits. Sometimes the control actually relays the messages, sometimes they appear to come direct from the communicating spirit. But always the control's catalyzing presence is believed to be essential. I had almost said "as essential as the medium's;" but strictly speaking, the medium is not there at all, at a seance of this type. Perhaps the mediumistic ability may be defined simply as the ability thus to step out and make room for the personality of the control. Whatever we believe about his source and true character, the control *is* recognizable as a personality. He comes in when the medium goes into trance, stays throughout the sitting, and goes out when the medium comes back. So far as external ap-

pearances go, he inhabits the medium's body in the same sense that the medium's own personality does. He speaks quite frankly through the medium's vocal apparatus, he gets up and walks about the room in the medium's shoes and in the medium's flesh and bones, etc., etc. He is self-consistent, and quite inconsistent with the medium. He is continuous from one sitting to another, recalling the events and persons of previous seances, and in every way he behaves in consonance with the claim that he is an intruding personality, temporarily housed in the medium's corporeal rind. He even develops to a reasonable degree as a series of sittings proceeds. Thus, White Feather's vocabulary and his general mastery of English, I was told, were much better now than when he began to work through Mr. Sloan.

White Feather is an American Indian. So are most controls; and the skeptic finds this a suspicious circumstance, suggesting that the mediums are copying from a standard. The believer, on the other hand, finds the persistence of the Indian type rather convincing than otherwise. He says that the Indian temperament, the Indian simplicity of life, the Indian closeness to Nature, combine to give the qualities of understanding and power which the control must have. I must confess that I don't know which argument is the more plausible.

White Feather greeted "Kenzie Chief" in broken English that improved as the seance pro-

ceeded. This is not itself suspicious; everything that occurs at a seance occurs feebly at first, and gains in clarity as it is repeated. The "power" is weak at the beginning, and gets worked up slowly to the proper pitch. Suspicion must attach, if anywhere, to this claim and to the generality of the crescendo effect which it covers, rather than to specific instances like White Feather's inability to parade his best English while the seance is cold. His voice was a shrill whine, maintained always in its characteristic pitch, and with no trace of the medium's Scotch.

"Whitey," as he prefers to be called, complained that his "old box"—the medium, for whom he has no other designation—was not working well tonight. When we first sat down, with Mr. Sloan still one of us, the white lights had been replaced by the red bulb. Whitey now ordered this out; then he complained querulously about the light from the fireplace. After much fumbling in the dark, a large opaque screen was located and placed so as to blanket the fire completely. Whitey's satisfaction over the absolute darkness that resulted was keen.

Just a word about this "absolute darkness." It means exactly what it says. Into the darkest room, ordinarily, some light leaks; and after one has been there a few moments, the dim outlines of objects begin to be perceptible. On the darkest night outdoors the same thing occurs, through the agency of starlight, or of diffused light from the universe at large, whose amount

is surprisingly great when the astronomer comes to measure it. But the darkness of a sealed seance room is another thing altogether. One can stay there till kingdom come, and visibility will remain at the zero mark. One who has never attended a dark seance has in all probability never been in this sort of darkness.

White Feather had a rough time with his spirit communicators. They kept crowding one another and usurping one another's places, like commuters at the sole telephone booth after a wreck. Frequently Whitey called them down sharply, and apologized to us for their impatience. Whitey himself was decidedly conversational. At all times Mr. McKenzie, and less freely the other sitters, addressed remarks of their own to him, responded to his, and were appropriately answered. Every once in a while Whitey would get stranded on a word that one of the sitters or one of the spirits had used; and the seance was not permitted to proceed until he had mastered it. On these occasions he would sometimes apologize for his poor English, whereupon one of the sitters would assure him that he was doing famously. At one point somebody complimented him upon his greatly increased "vocabulary," and Whitey demanded that this word be repeated. I tried to give him a substitute by telling him that it meant that he knew a lot of words, but he would have no substitute. He insisted on having the word itself, wrestled manfully with it, nearly strangled the

medium on it, and finally got it. Thereafter he used it several times, with conscious pride. All of his conversation was characterized by the use of "me" for "I," and by the numerous other errors that, with what accuracy I know not, are usually associated with the red man's efforts to talk the pale-face tongue.

After Whitey had been struggling with the situation for some time, voices began to come from the trumpet. At the beginning this had been stood on end, in the center of the circle. I was pretty sure it was out of the medium's reach, if he remained in his chair. Whether it was picked up or moved about in the production of voices I could not judge; the general belief of the spiritist is that it is. In any event, it stayed in the center of the circle.

There is never any doubt in any sitter's mind as to whether a given voice is from the trumpet. When it is, it has always a curious hollow sound that is quite unmistakable. The question interested me, whether this sound would be obtained if one spoke through the trumpet as through a megaphone, or whether it would be necessary for the voice to be produced actually within the trumpet. The muffled effect is so marked that one might be pardoned for leaning toward the latter hypothesis; but experiment with the trumpets of several mediums leaves no doubt that all the trumpet voices I have heard could be produced by talking into the trumpet, in normal fashion. Any extraordinary muffling would be

due to the complete or partial closing of the large end by the floor, etc.

Like everything else, the trumpet voices were weak and indistinct at first, and got better as they proceeded. Several attempts were made to give names, but there was no unanimity among the sitters as to what these were. Before very long, however, the trumpet gave forth a distinct sentence, clearly understood by all. The medium, on taking his permanent seat, had grasped the hands of the ladies on his either side; and save for short periods, when he withdrew his hands to rub them together or indulge in other types of mild convulsion, he had apparently been thus in contact at all times when not admittedly out of the chair. From time to time the ladies in question would announce that they had, or had not, his hands.

When the trumpet delivered its first definite sentence, I asked, in the interest of fuller information, whether both hands had been held at the critical moment; and I was assured that they had. Whitey then spoke up and invited me to exchange seats with the lady at his right. We effected the shift without upsetting anything, and my hand was firmly grasped, and with slight interruptions held throughout the next stage of the sitting. There was no substitution here; what I had was emphatically the medium's hand—hard, rough, and larger than his short stature and slight build would imply.

When the exchange was offered, Whitey prom-

ised the lady that she should have the seat back, later; and after a time I had an opportunity to offer it back to her. She declined, and Whitey accused me of lacking gallantry, toward himself. I explained that I had been trying to be gallant to the lady, and this he accepted. Stuff of the sort was continually passing between the sitters on the one hand, and the control or even the communicating spirits on the other. It seemed clearly beyond the normal mental horizon of the medium; the last thing I should expect from him would be a joke.

This conversational aspect of the sitting seemed to me of large significance. One rather expects, on going to such a gathering for the first time, to find much emotional tommyrot. There was a notable absence of this at all my seances. There was no emotion, no atmosphere of mystery, no hocus-pocus of any description. There was music, presumably to get the medium into trance; and darkness, presumably to keep him there. The music and the darkness and the detached voices, however, do not seem to have any reaction upon the nerves of the sitters. Neither regulars nor casual sitters hang with bated breath waiting for something to happen; the whole idea of a seance as a place where silence reigns, broken only by singing and sobbing until the voices come, is absurdly false.

Particularly impressive is the manner in which everybody chats with his neighbors. There is nothing suggesting silence or suspense.

You talk with the other sitters, with the control, with the spirits when they come. From the viewpoint of the believer, the occasion is simply an informal gathering of friends, some of whom happen to be dead. Those who are so, participate on a footing of absolute equality with those who are not. The sitters comport themselves exactly as though their friends had dropped in for a chat from the other side of the Thames or the Channel or the Atlantic, rather than, as they believe, from the other side of the Styx. From time to time the conversation actually prevents one from hearing the trumpet clearly!

One thing the outsider must not do, however—he must not refer to the spirits as “dead.” I do not see any reason why that word, as well as any other, cannot by agreement serve to define the state of being of those who have terminated this life, without any unwelcome implications as to what that state may be. But in the seance room it is not tolerated, and this is especially the case on the part of those to whom the word applies. Ask them when they died and they will inevitably reply that they are not dead, refusing further particulars until you substitute, of your own motion, the more welcome expression “passed over.”

Well: to get back to the seance in hand. When it first entered the stage where the trumpet voices took extensive part, there was every indication that a directing intelligence was at work, concerning which the smallest assumption that

would meet the facts would be, that it had telepathic access to the minds of the sitters. In my judgment this assumption would completely meet the facts; but I am more ready than most critics to extend the telepathic hypothesis to its extremes. The trumpet began to talk distinctly and coherently, in a voice that had not been heard before. Mr. Sloan's mediumship is not pre-eminently physical in its trend, but if all was as it seemed this voice was a physical phenomenon calling for an explanation. It came without question from the trumpet, well out toward the center of the circle; and I had one of the medium's hands while his left-hand neighbor said that she had the other. The bare physical possibility of his manipulating the trumpet with knees, feet or legs did not impress me strongly, even if we say nothing about the amount of noise he would likely make in attempting this. As far as the hypothesis of confederacy is concerned, I shall have to withhold comment; the major drawback of a circle of twelve people, or anything like twelve people, lies in the impossibility of having real assurance against this.

The hypothesis of ventriloquism, I would observe, hardly covers the ground. It is one of those very convenient blanket explanations that really explain nothing. The ventriloquist cannot work effectively in the dark. He does not deceive the ears so much as he does the eyes and the expectations, by getting his audience to think of and look at the quarter of the room whence he

wishes them to infer that the sound is coming. When eyes are out of action, his best weapon is gone; he can only deceive the expectations, and if one exercises any reasonable degree of caution, one's ears will tell the truth, contradicting one's expectations if necessary.

The voice from the trumpet announced itself as that of one Cornelius Morgan, a name that meant nothing to anyone present. No details of his alleged life were offered, but it was ultimately clear that he was an American. After a few remarks of no particular interest, he stated that someone was present from a great distance. There was another New Yorker in the circle, present for the first time; he remained silent, and I pleaded guilty to the indictment. Cornelius then went on to particularize New York as my home, or my point of origin—I am not sure which, or whether he made the distinction. On strict interpretation it would make a difference; though I am as much of a New Yorker as anybody, I live in New Jersey.

Whitey broke in here, to ask whether New York was in his country. Then he inquired how far it was from the Rocky Mountains. Speaking to me directly, he explained that he was a Crow, and that his home was at the foot of these; did I know what a Crow was? Whitey then turned the line over to Cornelius again; and the real show began.

Cornelius stated, categorically and without hesitation or prompting, and addressing me un-

mistakably, that about three weeks previously, on a Friday afternoon, at about 7.30 o'clock, I had been walking across the Brooklyn Bridge with a lady and a gentleman. This was getting pretty thick! I do not ordinarily get on the Bridge twice a year; since I moved from Brooklyn in 1914, I surely have not walked over it half a dozen times. But not long before sailing for Europe, I had been in New York with an hour or more to spare, in the company of two friends who live in Brooklyn and were about to start home. I suggested that if they would walk, I could accompany them, ride back, and still catch my train; and this was done. Assuredly this was the only time within a year when I had walked the Bridge.

I made Cornelius repeat his statement. Then I told him that, if I were to speak without stopping to think very carefully, I should place the expedition in question on a Saturday, and a bit earlier than 7.30; and that I knew for certain that it was with two gentlemen. The communicator at once rebuked me unmercifully for contemplating the cardinal sin of speech without thought, and read me a long lecture designed to show me what a peck of trouble such a vicious habit would get me into. Quite a bit of reparate passed here, but I finally convinced him that I had simply adopted an unhappy phrase, and that all I meant was that to my very best honest opinion of the moment, the facts were with me and not with him. He thereupon in-

sisted vehemently upon his version, including the lady.

Now one of my companions on this promenade, Mr. C. S. Branderbury of the Associated Press, is a diarist of a degree of faithfulness that would discourage a very Pepys from emulation. His little brown book gives the date of Saturday, January 20th., and his memory was very clear regarding the hour of 4.00 P. M. About the third person's having been a man there was never any doubt.

This would seem, then, to be one of those miserable ambiguous cases, where it is impossible to get any two critics to agree as to just what percentage of success and what of failure has been recorded. It must be admitted that a Briton would easily exaggerate the probability of a New Yorker's walking over Brooklyn Bridge; that if a Briton guessed that such a walk had been taken by one with regular employment, 7.30 P. M. on a weekday would be a very rational hour to guess; and that if a Briton were called upon to name at random a bridge in America, he would surely have heard of the Brooklyn Bridge, and quite likely of no other, by name. On the other hand, the elapsed time since the walk was remarkably accurate, the number of people was correct, and the time was not seriously in error. Moreover, if one were guessing, it would be quite absurd to guess so many details at once; and one could certainly find, even at 3,000-mile range, a more likely per-

formance than a specific walk at a specific hour. It strikes me, on the whole, that it is rather crowding the mourners to attribute all the correct elements here to chance; and whatever else they may have been, they certainly were not the result of clandestine information.

Hoping to test him out further, I asked Cornelius whether he could make any estimate of the last previous time when I had tramped the Bridge. He got highly indignant, and stated with heat that he was no walking encyclopedia. I replied that this was a perfectly good answer to my question, which on its face had been aimed merely at learning whether he knew this. Thus mollified, he explained how he happened to know about the one walk. He had become aware of my intended trip, had appreciated its importance to himself and his friends on both sides, and had been following my movements closely for some time before I sailed. This made sense, to the extent that the trip was planned and the tickets bought before January 20th.

Cornelius was far from through with me. By way of support for his claim of prior knowledge regarding my trip, he went on to state that he had known of my "reserving rooms" on two ships. This was the literal truth in a peculiarly apt form. After fixing February 10th. as my sailing date, we found two ships were to go on this date, the *Olympic* and the *Noordam*; and we had a specific stateroom reserved for me on each, pending advice from England as to the

date on which I must arrive. This state of affairs held for about two weeks, after which it became clear that the slower boat would get me across in time; and only then was the *Olympic* reservation cancelled and the one for the *Noordam* taken up. Ordinarily if one were describing simultaneous dealing with two vessels, one would speak of having taken tentative *passage* on both; the very unusual, and explicitly correct, statement about having reserved rooms on both struck me as distinctly evidential. The possibility of guessing this, at a season when the *Noordam* was forced to sail with only 38 first-class passengers, is too remote for discussion; it would be idiotic to suppose that at such a season one would feel called upon to make a double reservation. As for information, I think that can be ruled out quite categorically.

For whatever bearing it may have on the hypothesis of telepathy, I mention that at the moment when this message came through, I was thinking, not at all about the circumstances of my trip, but about Mr. Branderbury's diary and the certainty that it would settle the disputed date. In my own mind there is no question that telepathy is usually subconscious, on the part both of the sender and of the recipient.

Cornelius now turned away from me momentarily, but came back again, identifying me unmistakably as "the gentleman at the medium's right." "Friend, you are a writing man, are you not?" he asked. This alone, if a guess,

would have been a mighty shrewd one. Sir Arthur had very shortly before got into all kinds of hot water through ill-advised confidence in the potential good behavior of several newspaper men whom he had introduced into seances much as he had introduced me; and it might almost have been hazarded that the next stranger under his wing would *not* be a writing man! But upon my pleading guilty to this charge, he went on to state that I had been writing something before I came to the seance—a letter, he thought. I decided that it would not be giving him a lead if I informed him that I had been that morning engaged on a letter, but had finished and mailed it. Cornelius expressed complete willingness to be corrected to this extent; but he insisted that I had been writing *something* immediately before coming to the seance—that I had, in fact, got up from it to come, leaving it unfinished. This was the literal truth; the paper was still in my portable typewriter on my writing table, half fed through and waiting for me to return and strike the next key. It was not exactly a literary composition; my two days' experience in Boulogne had brought home to me more clearly than ever the fact that my French vocabulary runs on a one-track line, and I had been drawing up a list of a few hundred useful French words which I planned to add to my independent speaking equipment before crossing the Channel again. If anyone is prepared to include my chambermaid in a gigantic

plot to mislead me, this item could have been the result of clandestine information, but I really hope that nobody will go as far as that.

We have, then, a series of statements concerning my point of origin, my promenade of January 20th., the circumstances attending my engaging passage for Europe, my profession, and my actions prior to coming to the seance. No exact count can be made of the percentage of right and wrong here; no count can even be effected, in which all critics will agree, of the number of distinct statements made. Much, however, of what the alleged Cornelius Morgan told me was correct; and of the correct items, hardly any two could have come to the medium from the same source, while to some extent at least it seems that not all of them could have come to him even in the same general manner. None of these statements would check Cornelius' identity. But that they do indicate some channel, telepathic or otherwise supernormal, through which information which Mr. Sloan did not possess in his own right passed into the physical shell of his brain, seems to me fairly safe—if the reader will remember that I have said "indicate" and not "prove."

Cornelius next started to talk about some numbers, and Wall Street. We could not quite make out whether he were telephoning or simply giving an address; but in any event, the numbers which were audible meant nothing to me or to any other sitter. He then asked me if

I had ever been in Waupaca, Wis. (it is at least worthy of passing note that he pronounced this correctly), or Denver. The mention of Colorado's metropolis was followed by that of Riverside. I was contradicted in my inference that he meant Riverside, Cal.; whereupon one of the ladies spoke up and identified it as a section of Denver where she had lived or visited. Nothing further developed here, and Cornelius went away for good.

He was followed by an unidentified and unnamed communicator, who passed around the circle with the medium's physical apparatus, giving a message to each sitter. Mine was not merely trivial, but to my way of thinking positively objectionable. A female spirit was present; was my mother on the other side? No? My grandmother, then, perhaps? This attack, of course, was certain to succeed. The communicator went on to address me; it was not clear whether the female ancestral spirit was back of the message or not. I was confronted with a decision. There were two paths. The one that looked so rosy was the rough one, while the one that looked so rough was the easy one. I flatly repudiated this platitudinous atrocity; whereupon the communicator said something about crossed currents, and turned to the lady who was separated from me by the empty chair. She accepted it as hers, and in response to a query from one of the sitters added that it was of help to her.

It may not be out of order to digress here for a moment. Sir Arthur himself, and all the other spiritists who give the matter serious thought, refrain very carefully from claiming that everything that occurs at a seance is due to the intervention of departed personalities. Sir Arthur, with whom I have discussed the matter more than with anyone else, explicitly denies this claim; so does Mr. Engholm, and so does Mr. Gow. Their idea is that the medium himself makes a fairly large contribution from his own sub-consciousness; that any or all of the sitters may make such contributions, telepathically; I suppose they would admit the possibility of random contributions coming in from outside the circle in the same way; and then they of course believe that contributions are actually made by survived identities—not all of whom, by the way, are necessarily ex-humans, or necessarily benevolent. They are strongly impressed, to quote Sir Arthur, “with the immense difficulty of untangling this complex net of causes,” and of identifying just what elements of the seance are to be attributed to this, and what to that. Sir Arthur illustrates this viewpoint by quoting a conversation he had through the mediumship, if I remember correctly, of Lady Doyle, with a very distinguished member of the group that has “passed over.” A book had been recently published, purporting to be by this gentleman, through the automatic-writing mediumship of a certain lady. Sir Arthur had found passages

of the book strongly characteristic of the alleged author, and others that equally lacked his touch. So he asked him how much of it was really his; and the answer came, without an instant's hesitation: "Oh, about three-quarters; the rest is the medium."

The bearing of this digression upon what went immediately before is obvious. The spiritists need some such doctrine as this, and need it imperatively; for otherwise, the trifling messages of the sort which I have just quoted, and which occur with every medium, would very shortly oblige them to discredit every medium. But in the presence of this doctrine, every unfavorable episode of the seance room can be explained away without in the least smirching the medium or the main structure of spiritism. Nor is the doctrine so objectionable as this remark might suggest; for if we exclude the action of the discarnate personalities whose existence we do not accept as proved, we must agree with the general notion of a tangled web of causes behind the action of the seance.

The messages delivered to me at this stage of the sitting were not uniquely unsatisfactory; everything that was said during this circuit of the circle was of the same universal applicability. It was at this time that we began to get suggestions of physical phenomena, which is significant in view of the fact that the medium was now known to be up and about, without any check upon his movements other than the fact

that his hands were intermittently in contact with the hands of the successive sitters as he stood before them.

Phosphorescent lights began to appear—here, there, somewhere else. In each case such a light occurred in the immediate vicinity of the person to whom the message under way at the moment was addressed; but in addition, there were seen lights that were independent of the messages and, apparently, of the location of the medium. None of these lights possessed any illuminating power. Usually they were seen by some of the sitters, and missed by those who had the medium between them and the light; but on one occasion the light was large enough to reveal to me the head and shoulders of the medium very vaguely silhouetted against it. This does not contradict the denial of illuminating power; the silhouette was against the light itself, and not against any area illuminated by the light. Most of them were far too small and dim for any such effect, producing nothing whatever that could be observed by one who sat on the wrong side of the medium or of any other opaque object.

I should have been satisfied of the objective character of these lights, even had Mr. Engholm not informed me, the next morning, that at previous sittings they had been photographed. The camera was left open throughout the seance. In this way the time that would otherwise have been lost in opening and closing the shutter was available for the exposure, and the developed plate

showed light tracks, quite analogous to those of the stars across a fixed plate. As this would imply, the lights were not usually stationary; but their range of movement was not usually large.

Most of the lights were approximately round, though perhaps a bit longer one way than the other. They gave very definitely the impression of phosphorescence, rather than of flame or filament; though in retrospect I am unable to give any specific reason for this impression, which may therefore have been due to conscious or unconscious expectation. I watched very carefully for any indication of filament shape, and found none; nor could I observe any change of color value as they faded in and out, such as is seen in the case of the ordinary incandescent lamp. Since these seances, however, experiments with small electric torches draped with colored paper have made these negative observations seem less important than they appeared to be at the time.

One of the lights stood out above all the others. It came when I was well convinced that the medium was holding the hands of the lady in my original seat, while delivering her message. It was a long, snaky affair, quite different from any of the others; it moved clear across the circle, from one side to the other, well behind the medium as I had him located.

Of the messages delivered during this round of the circle, some came from the medium's lips and some from the trumpet. The latter had up

to this time remained with reasonable certainty unmoved in the center of the circle, save for whatever tilting may have been involved in the delivery of the messages. Noting the mixture of the two types of message, I centered my attention upon the question whether at any time both types were being delivered simultaneously. As a general thing they certainly were not, though they followed one another quite closely. But after my attention had been momentarily distracted by one of the brighter lights, I was rather inclined to believe that during this interval of absorption in another thing I had been vaguely conscious of the double message.

The trumpet now began to do considerable travelling. On at least one occasion it was heard inside the circle, outside, inside again, and once more outside, in more rapid succession than I should suppose to be possible by manual dexterity alone. I could not be sure of the medium's place at this moment, but he seemed to be standing at the left arm of his chair. The circle was as small as it could be with twelve sitters none of whom was actually on another's lap; and so far as mere reach is concerned, this motion of the trumpet could doubtless have been done by the medium's hand. But the speed was extreme.

After this, with the medium again apparently in the neighborhood of his seat, the trumpet traveled about the circle, caressing each sitter somewhere about the face or head. Some of

us got it sideways, some endways. In my own case it would have been a matter of no finesse at all for this caress to have been manually directed by the medium; I cannot say where he was when the other sitters were touched. But I can say that whenever the trumpet moved freely he was out of his chair, under cover of delivering a message or of preparing to deliver a message to one of the sitters. This of course made the travels of the trumpet much less impressive than they would have been at another time.

One thing must be said regarding any hypothesis that calls for *secret* movement of the medium about the circle, however. Save when he had obvious and legitimate business there, I was never able to detect his presence near me, either through personal contact, shuffling or other noises, feeling his breath, etc., etc. Nor did I, at any stage when he was supposed to be still, hear contact between his garments and those of the sitters, or any other sound indicating that he was walking or gliding about. On the other hand, when he was supposed to be in motion, he did make, not enough noise to stand for a deliberate attempt at creating a commotion, but just about enough noise to seem right. This would make it appear that if he does move about with such freedom as to account for the manifestations, he must have an extraordinary sense of location in the dark.

When I sat next him, on the other hand, he

must have released and regained my hand a dozen times. Invariably if I left it exactly where he dropped it, he came back to pick it up without fumbling. But if I moved it ever so little, he had to find it just as you and I find things in the dark—by fumbling for it, with more or less resultant disturbance of the entire neighborhood. It cannot be maintained that the circle is always, when he comes back to it, exactly as he left it. As regards feet and legs at least, and heads to a less degree, it is in a state of continual flux. Yet any moving about the circle which the medium does secretly is done with no suggestion of fumbling or groping. I state these contradictory facts without any further attempt to formulate a conclusion from them; but I shall return in subsequent chapters, to this business of navigation in the dark.

After the trumpet performance had been wound up, Whitey took up a lot of time apologizing for the amount of time he had taken up, and for the difficulty which he had had in keeping his communicators in order. At several times one of these had actually broken through and started an unauthorized statement, to be rudely withdrawn and forced to wait his turn. Whitey's regrets having been suitably expressed, a brand new voice took hold, coming from the medium's mouth. We were informed that the speaker was the "director" from the other side—apparently Whitey's superior officer. He spoke in highly cultured tones, which I

should almost be inclined to insist were quite outside the medium's normal powers; and he offered an extremely well-worded prayer and blessing—which of course the medium or anybody else could learn by heart. One or two deceased friends of Mr. McKenzie had a few words with him, the voices being apparently recognizable, with reservations. Then, in accordance with what the director had told us, White Feather got out of his box and went away, and the red light was turned on again as a preliminary to the white lights. The lights are always put on thus gradually, in order to avoid dazzle.

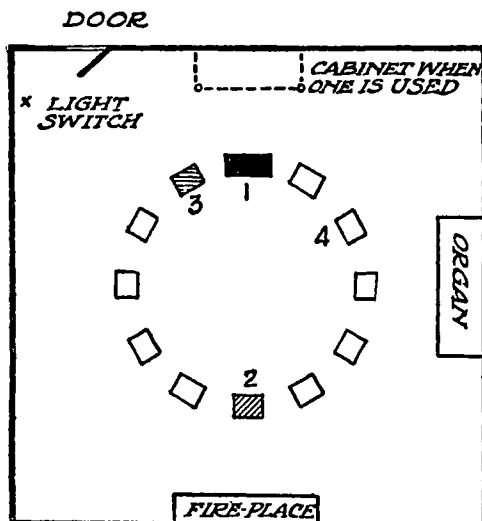
## CHAPTER VII

### ANOTHER SITTING WITH JOHN SLOAN

**A**T my second sitting with Mr. Sloan, on the 27th., Sir Arthur and Lady Doyle were present. This time it was Mr. McKenzie's turn to have an engagement elsewhere, so Mrs. McKenzie was one of the circle. The other sitters need not be specified by name.

The medium was very fatigued when he arrived, and there was greater difficulty in getting him into trance than there had been on Friday. Considerably more singing and playing was necessary as a preliminary, and during the seance the control called at intervals for music—something that he had not done on the previous occasion. After the medium finally went off and the control got in the saddle, all the external characteristics of the seance were much weaker than on Friday, and Whitey was much more pessimistic about the condition in which he found his "old box." Barring the difficulty in enunciation, however, the purely communicational side of the sitting, as distinguished from the physical phenomena in which my primary interest lay, was probably better developed than on Friday; and most of the other sitters, who were there solely for spirit advice and spirit consolation, were inclined to rate the session as more satisfactory than its predecessor.

Sir Arthur sat at the medium's right, and another gentleman at his left. When I made my own memoranda of the sitting I had before me



In both sittings the medium occupied the chair marked 1. On Friday, Mr. Bird was moved from seat 2 to seat 3; Mr. McKenzie occupied seat 4; all the other seats were filled by sitters whose names are not mentioned. On Tuesday, Sir Arthur occupied seat 3, with Lady Doyle at his left; into the seat next to her Mr. Bird was moved from seat 4, which he occupied originally. Mrs. McKenzie was in or near seat 2. Again all the chairs were occupied.

The room and the seating at the Sloan seances

Sir Arthur's brief notes made for his own files. In these I found the statement: "I held his (the medium's) right hand, and Mr. Marshall his left, and this control continued all the time

save when the medium walked around the circle, or withdrew his hands momentarily from ours as he sat in his chair."

As soon as White Feather took charge of the proceedings, he requested me to change seats with another gentleman. This shifted me from the second place at the medium's left, to the third at his right, with Sir Arthur and Lady Doyle between him and me. The diagram and caption of page 38 will make this clearer.

Sir Arthur (who was one of the two sitters in a position to make this observation) is very definite that the medium's hands were held when the trumpet first spoke. He agrees with my observation that at no time did the trumpet and the control speak simultaneously.

The first voice from the trumpet was that of Peter Galloway, a Glasgow spiritualist recently deceased. Sir Arthur referred to his passing as having occurred "about six weeks ago," and the voice, correcting him, said "three weeks ago tonight." No sitter was able to recall the date, but all took it for granted that the "spirit" was right. And I find that Mr. Galloway *did* die on February 6th. The date is of record, so the incident is not evidential, but I find it very suggestive.

Mr. Galloway professed extreme difficulty in using the trumpet, and Whitey gloated unmercifully over him on this count. In life the deceased had been very impatient over this point, insisting that it ought to be easy to talk coher-

ently and to articulate decently with this instrument; and the control was immensely tickled that, now he was in a position to try it, he found it so difficult. This by-play again seemed to me beyond the medium's conscious ingenuity. No message of any import was received here.

A succession of voices in the trumpet followed, all extremely weak. Particularly ineffective was the attempt of a female voice to come through. The control interfered here, and described the lady who was trying to communicate, addressing himself to Lady Doyle and implying, without actually saying so, that the call was for her. Brown hair and hazel eyes were among the specifications, and this corresponds with the appearance of Lady Doyle's dearest deceased friend. Absolute failure to get the name across, after trying both the trumpet and the direct voice, robbed the incident of significance.

Dr. Bell of Edinburgh, the original of Sherlock Holmes, put in his appearance through the trumpet with a word for Sir Arthur. The message was neither evidential, nor of interest save to Sir Arthur. Indeed, Dr. Bell's appearance cannot be regarded as in any way significant, for enough has been published regarding the manner in which his personality is incorporated into that of the immortal Sherlock, to put at the disposal of any literate person ample data for a simple message from the Doctor to Sherlock's creator.

A man was seen clairvoyantly by the control,

in the same fashion as the lady of the hair and eyes. This time the name came through—Robert Leckie. The surname is Lady Doyle's maiden name; the given name that of a distant relative. The control attempted to identify him as Lady Doyle's father, who was still living; then as her grandfather. Recalling the mother-grandmother message that came to me in the previous sitting, the most charitable thing that can be said for this is that it was an unfortunate coincidence.

The control finally delivered, here, a message to Lady Doyle under her father's correct given name of James. This, however, as well as the surname, if not actually known by the medium would be easily ascertainable. Though accepting the spirit and the message without apparent question, Sir Arthur grants without reservation that there is no direct evidence; his acceptance is based on general rather than specific grounds. Indeed, it is easy enough to understand his attitude here. He has what he considers ample evidence, proving rigorously and scientifically that the dead live and communicate. He does not, therefore, feel called upon to question any particular message, any more than, on handling a copper wire and getting a sharp tingling sensation, I should feel inclined to question that there was really an electric current on the wire, rather than a cleverly concealed pin. The general case must have some bearing upon the particular one, else we should have to establish the

fundamentals of science afresh every time we pick up the telephone or step into our auto.

The next voice proclaimed itself very distinctly as that of Malcolm Leckie, Lady Doyle's brother. Sir Arthur remarked that he had been killed in action at Mons, and the voice instantly corrected him: "three miles and two furlongs from Mons." Sir Arthur, recalling that at the time he had sealed the distance off on the map, was able to endorse the correction as regards the miles, and to express the opinion that nobody save Malcolm himself knew with sufficient accuracy the spot of his taking away to check up the furlongs. In connection with these furlongs, he remarked that in life his brother-in-law had been an extremely precise person, and that the message had his personality written all over it. The sitters accepted the incident as extremely evidential. Though quite able without the slightest strain to swallow it as genuine telepathy, I must say that I do not find it at all evidential. The place where a person of Malcolm Leckie's connection was killed must have been a matter of public record at the time. If the two furlongs could be checked now, they could have been got from the records that would be used in checking them; and there you are.

Oscar Hornung, a nephew of Sir Arthur's, came in long enough to tell him that he would meet much opposition on his coming American tour. This, by the way, he had from practically every voice that addressed him, coupled with

the exhortation to stand firm for the cause. It represented his very definite expectation, and therefore was without evidential value at the time. During the interval between this sitting and the present writing, however, Sir Arthur's American tour of 1923 has passed into history; and I am sure he will not deny that the expedition has been a triumphal procession to an extent which he could not by any possibility have anticipated. Consequently I should be inclined to give to these messages a very large contra-evidential standing, so far as their bearing upon the spirit hypothesis is concerned.

Ellis Powell (not to be confused with Evan Powell), a deceased spiritualist, came in, speaking in what I was assured was a highly characteristic poetic vein. I thought it far too poetic, in fact, for conversation, or even for exhortation in an informal gathering of friends; it seemed to me that it must be a quotation. "No artist has ever painted, no poet ever imagined, the beauty of the land wherein we dwell." The only redeeming feature of this is the insistence of all auditors that it is characteristic of Powell. If it is, I should hate to have him in the family!

After a few more attempts at the trumpet, the medium arose, much earlier than the previous week, to pass around the circle. This is a regular feature of the Sloan seances. The spirit lights appeared, synchronizing with this activity on the medium's part as they had on Friday; but there were fewer of them than on that occa-

sion. In one or two cases, however, they were of extreme brilliance. Mrs. de C., an authoress well known in Britain, was particularly favored. One is told that, when the light is presented directly to one, if one looks intently through it, one will see a spirit face. Mrs. de C. saw this clearly, though unable to recognize the features as those of anyone she knew. In her case and that of several other sitters—all ladies so far as I could recall—the presentation of the spirit lights was accompanied by material contact described as that of draperies. With no wish to be too severe here, I must point out that the medium was wholly out of control, and that in description of these "draperies" nothing was said that would in any way discredit the hypothesis that they were his pocket handkerchief, or something equally commonplace.

When the medium got around to me in his circuit, Whitey referred back to my communications of the previous sitting. We had a bit of conversation about the unfinished word-list (without any reference to its exact character, which was apparently still undetermined), and I assured him that it was finished. I fear that I "muffed" one here. Not until after the seance did I realize that Whitey himself had been substituted for Cornelius Morgan, and that if I had pursued the matter judiciously, I might have elicited some very informative statements.

Whitey now ventured into the realms of prophecy, and told me that I was to make a trip

over the water. This would have been sufficiently obvious, in view of everybody's knowledge that I was an American, and the very clear presumption that ultimately I must go home. I acknowledged the message with this in mind; and the control at once met the point (which I had not made aloud) by saying: "Not a long journey, just a short one."

This put the matter on a somewhat different basis. Unless the medium or the control was shrewd enough to infer that an American interested in psychic phenomena would hardly come to England without at least going to see Dr. Geley in Paris, it looks like a regular prediction. He went on to specify further that I should travel to Austria, and to Leipzig. As a guess, Austria would be natural enough. Frau Silbert, perhaps the most successful of all the mediums who have sat in England during the present-day psychic revival, had gone home to Austria shortly before my arrival in England; and if Mr. Sloan did not know this in his conscious mind, it requires very little hypothesizing to put the knowledge into his subconsciousness. Leipzig, however, is something else; so far as I know it is of no psychic interest whatever, and there was therefore no possible reason to guess that I should go there.

Curiously enough, on a basis of fulfillment, the thing worked out quite the reverse of what the advance "dope" would have indicated. I

did not get to Austria, but I *did* pass through Leipzig en route from Berlin to Munich.

Before I was reached on this round of the circle, an interesting incident occurred. The sitter in the second or third seat at my right was an Italian gentleman. When the medium reached him, the trumpet began to talk, unmistakably, in a foreign language. It was not very audible, but careful attention satisfied those of the circle who knew any French that it was that language. This included Sir Arthur, Lady Doyle, myself, and several others. I distinctly made out several times *il y a*; and at another, moment there was an unmistakable nasal which Sir Arthur took for *je pense* and Lady Doyle for *comprends*. I was also fairly sure of the word *francais*. I was quite certain that the difficulty in understanding was due to actual inaudibility, rather than to fundamentally bad articulation; the French impressed me as well spoken, and surely without any trace of Scotch. One can be as certain that the medium knows no French as one can ever be about a negative proposition of this character—which, necessarily, falls short of scientific proof. If I were to start my next paragraph in classic Chinese of perfect execution, how should I ever prove that I had never consciously met or learned that tongue?

The Italian gentleman apparently was without any knowledge of French. He understood nothing of what the voice was trying to say, several times asking it, in great bewilderment,

whether it were trying to *parla-te italiano?* The query got no intelligible answer, in French or any other tongue. Whitey was very much exercised about this business of talking French. "Me not know what this man talking about," he exclaimed fretfully; and again, "What this man say, Chief?" He seemed to regard the speaker as an intruder and a nuisance, for whom he owed the circle an apology; and he apparently looked in the same way upon another spirit who spoke in Scotch so broad as to be, to all intents and purposes, a foreign tongue.

An interesting speculation is whether the medium — or the control, if one insists — did not, recognizing the Italian as a foreigner, make an effort, subconsciously, to drag up from somewhere a foreign language to talk to him in — getting the wrong connection.

In this circuit of the circle, quite a pause was made when the medium came to Sir Arthur and Lady Doyle, and a long harangue about the coming American trip was delivered. Violent opposition, spirit aid and ultimate victory were the burden of this song.

In this seance there was no attempt to do stunts with the trumpet. All the trumpet voices came from within the circle, there was no display of movement by the trumpet, and it was not used as a means of contacts. Several times, when it was speaking, Sir Arthur and Mr. Marshall volunteered the information that they had the medium's hands, and that he seemed

quite limp in his chair. The latter statement is of course aimed at the suggestion that the medium was manipulating the trumpet with his knees. If the reader will experiment, I think he will find that limpness of the medium's arms and body, if really established, would go a good distance toward acquitting him of being engaged upon the trumpet with his legs.

Sir Arthur tells me that in no case was the trumpet voice recognized as that of the alleged communicator, with the possible exception of that of Ellis Powell.

At some time during the sitting—I find an isolated note on this incident, which my memory fails to put in its proper place at this late date—reference was again made, by the control or a communicator, to the fact that I am a writing man. Then came something which I thought particularly wide of the mark, and particularly in the nature of a generalization. I was told that I am too cautious, that I write things and then scratch them out through hesitation to have them appear over my name, that I should learn better to recognize and more fully to abandon myself to what Whitey had some difficulty in characterizing properly — Lady Doyle finally supplying “inspiration” as the desired word.

The very direct implication was made that I scratch these rejected bits of inspiration with my pen, whereas the fact is, if I were to scratch them at all it would be necessarily with a series of x's and m's. Originally a matter of some

difficulty, composition on the machine has become so natural to me that I never voluntarily take pen in hand save for the purpose of signing a check, or for mathematical computation. Also, the bulk of what I write goes out, on the editorial page and elsewhere in the columns of the *Scientific American*, without any indication of my personal authorship.

I do not know just how significant these objections in detail are. Certainly, however, I can present objections of principle that are significant enough. I am mighty sure that whenever I don't say exactly what I think it is not through any cold feet on my own part, but comes rather through the intervention of some more cautious member of the editorial staff or the business management. And I am mighty sure that I am sufficiently successful in the gentle art of introspection to make the categorical statement that Whitey's remarks miss fire completely as applied to me. They look altogether like a shotgun prescription for all writers.

An interesting bit of by-play came in this seance when the control, withdrawing the medium's hands from Sir Arthur's and Mr. Marshall's, utilized them for the purpose of massaging the medium's legs, which had been quite lame during the day. Sir Arthur has had a similar manifestation, his son appearing at a seance and massaging affected parts of his anatomy with the medium's hands; in this instance, I believe that I am correct in stating

that the difficulty was not known to the medium.

As on the previous night, a voice identified only as that of "the director" interfered at the appropriate moment, requesting that the seance be brought to a close out of consideration for the medium. It seemed to me that his voice was less nicely modulated and his words less nicely chosen and less certainly delivered than before.

Just at the moment when the medium was supposed to be coming out from control and resuming consciousness in his own personality, an extremely large and brilliant light appeared—by far the most startling physical phenomenon of the two sessions. It was flat and elliptic, six or eight inches across; whether an actual disk or a ring I was not certain. It rose diagonally from the vicinity of the medium's head, floating up and away to one side. For a second or two it retained its original brilliance, then faded rapidly; but it must have reached practically to the ceiling before it became invisible. I need hardly say that the sitters identified it without question or argument as the departing spirit of White Feather.

Sir Arthur and Mr. Engholm both find that after a sitting they are apt to be very fatigued. Sir Arthur has actually found it advisable to eat only a phantom meal before the seance, just as though he were an athlete about to engage in competition. They both agree that the drain is more likely to be felt if sitting next the medium, but that it is by no means restricted to one in

this position. After this sitting, Sir Arthur said next day that he felt very weak and drawn out. All this had not been put to me until after Tuesday's sitting; but it sent my mind very forcefully back to my own condition following Friday's session. On Sunday I had been quite unable to walk so far or so vigorously as is my wont; and throughout Saturday and Sunday I had suffered from backache and other standard symptoms of great fatigue. This was not due to suggestion, because the suggestion was not given me until long after I had recovered. After Tuesday's session, when I sat further from the medium, I felt no such effects; I was on my feet almost all day Wednesday, in much less comfortable shoes than the old ones in which I had spent the week-end, and without any fatigue at all. I do not know that all this is at all significant, but record it as it represents the facts.

Summing up the two Sloan sittings, my general impression was one of good faith. The phenomena themselves were not particularly impressive; with the intermittent freedom of the medium, it seemed simple enough for him to have done most of them himself. There was a good deal that it did not appear how he could have done, but regarding this point I felt altogether inclined to suspend the formation even of a tentative opinion until I should have had a seance, somewhere and with some medium, at which the conditions would be a little sharper and the results considerably more impressive.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A CLAIRVOYANT SITTING WITH MRS. OSBORNE LEONARD

FOR Saturday morning, March 3rd., a sitting with Mrs. Leonard had been arranged for me. This medium is always booked up solid, and a place was made for me on her program only when Mrs. McKenzie gave up, in my favor, one of her own personal sittings. This, it will be appreciated, represented a real sacrifice. The clairvoyant and clairaudient mediumship of Mrs. Leonard naturally runs entirely to "spirit messages," and sincere spiritualists like Mrs. McKenzie get a great deal of consolation through sitting with her. As far as I was concerned, there was no prospect of getting any physical phenomena, naturally; but in the interests of completing my psychic education I was very glad indeed for the opportunity to sit with a medium of this type.

Mrs. Leonard's clairvoyance is of the sort that sees departed persons gathering about the sitter. These are supposed to be the sitter's deceased relatives and friends, and they are supposed to have come to the seance for the purpose of getting messages "through" to him. Obviously there is much emotional satisfaction to be derived out of this by the person who has the yearning to converse with his dead. Equally

obvious is the possibility that evidential matter will be offered. The mechanism of the seance works, as with physical mediums, through a "control." In Mrs. Leonard's case the control is a little East Indian girl who calls herself Feda. At one time or another Feda has built up a considerable history of her own. She claims to have been married, willy-nilly and at a very early age, to some Indian prince or rajah, and to have died in childbirth at the age of thirteen or fourteen. The general effect of her personality is such as to support this statement of age, but there are frequent moments when Feda goes way beyond her years in one way or another.

The "spirits" who come to Mrs. Leonard's little cottage to communicate with her sitter do not talk to him directly, through automatic or independent voice. They communicate, in some undefined fashion, with Feda; and the latter, using the medium's vocal apparatus, tells the sitter what they have told her. Feda speaks in a shrill, high-pitched voice, but one without any disagreeable effect. I must say, however, that to my ears it seemed more like an imitation of a child's voice than the genuine article. I had been warned that I should have difficulty in understanding her, but found this not to be the case. Every word she uttered, after the first sentence or two, was quite clearly enunciated.

Whatever we believe about Mrs. Leonard's mediumship, it seems clear that, in order to score a success, she needs a supply of spirits

who would be likely to communicate with her sitter. If we can imagine a human with absolutely no ancestors or other relatives and no friends or even acquaintances among the great majority, Mrs. Leonard ought to score an absolute zero in sitting with such an isolated person. I went to her with the idea rather fixed in my mind that I was much nearer to this isolation than her usual sitter, and that I should therefore be a difficult subject for her. I must be pardoned for inserting so much of my own history and my own personality in the present chapter; comment upon what Feda told me would be impossible in its absence.

With this apology, therefore, I will bolster the viewpoint which I carried into the seance by stating that I have attended, in my entire life, just two funerals—my maternal grandmother's, and that of a cousin on my mother's side, some six years older than me. If communication with the dead is possible, I should say that both these persons would certainly attempt it with me. One boyhood friend and playmate was sufficiently intimate to support the concession that he might try. With these three exceptions, I cannot think of a single person, now dead, of whom the claim that communication with me was being attempted would possess any large inherent probability. It would be, I should think, extraordinarily difficult to find a civilized white person who knows his parentage and who has been as little touched by death as

I have. In view of all this, I went to Mrs. Leonard with the very liveliest interest, not alone in her mediumship as such, but in the question of what she would make of my case.

She seated me at a small table, and arranged a chair for herself, further out in the room. She produced a very small kerosene lamp, heavily shaded with red save around the base. This, when lighted and stood on my table, threw a circle of white light upon the table-top amply large enough for all purposes of notetaking; while in the direction of the medium it cast such a feeble red light that, with the room otherwise dark, I could with difficulty discern the outlines of her figure.

The concession with regard to taking notes is quite necessary. After a physical seance, one with the reportorial turn of mind has no difficulty in sufficiently reconstructing the march of events without this aid. But Feda's messages are of such character that one must get them all down, substantially verbatim, or they are of no interest. I think the running transcript of Feda's talk which I shall give will make this clear; and if it does this, it will be sufficient justification for itself.

The medium seated herself, wrapped her feet and legs in a heavy steamer rug, and placed a handkerchief over her face. Presently she was breathing heavily, and in a whistling, asthmatic fashion. After a few minutes of this, there came an extremely faint whispering, which could by

no means whatever be interpreted into words. It got stronger, and the first of it that I could distinguish was "tell all in a minute." A pause after this was followed by the control's voice, clear and shrill; and the sitting was under full headway.

Feda talked like a streak of greased lightning for about two hours, and I kept up with her only at the expense of the legibility of my notes. She took her communicators in turn, describing their appearance in more or less detail—far too great detail, and with far too great intelligence, in fact, for her years; then delivering their messages, and finally passing on to the next applicant. Now and again there was fumbling with this procedure, so that I was uncertain just what Feda was trying to do. It was not always clear, for instance, which of two spirits she was quoting, or to which some reference in the message was intended to apply. Like Mr. Sloan's control, she had some trouble keeping her communicants in order. Her standard expression for calling them to time is "Wait a minute," spoken in a tone suggesting that she is addressing some impatient and rather fractious inferior. She is always willing to restrain the hasty communicator while she finishes her description of his appearance, while she arranges his ideas in words familiar to herself, or while the sitter catches up in his transcription. She several times ordered the communicator to wait for me, or to slow up for my bene-

fit. In practically every instance, when she did this, I was really in arrears.

Whenever the communicator used words that went above Feda's head, or ideas which she could not clothe in her own words, she would hesitate, then ask him to repeat. Though as stated above, the communicator's original delivery of the message to Feda had always been through some channel inaudible to me, the request for repetition was invariably met through the medium's vocal organs, in a husky whisper quite intelligible to me. But Feda took no cognizance of this, always repeating to me what I had just heard the "spirit" telling her. Mrs. Leonard's voice, by the way, is so deep that its conversion into these hoarse whispers is less surprising than into Feda's shrill piping.

Feda's first clean-cut words were a greeting to me by name (the medium said she did not know this, and Mrs. McKenzie thought it had not been given her), plus the statement that she was glad to see me, and had been expecting me. Too much significance should not be attached to this, however, for as far as I can learn Feda is expecting, and glad to see, everybody who comes to her. She went on to tell me, on her own responsibility and without any spirit communicator, that I must develop myself, develop my powers. Not psychic powers, she hastened to add, but the more ordinary ones of inspiration. This is one of several words that constitute a seance commonplace.

The name James was twice mentioned here, with nothing to connect it up. My own J. stands for James, but I have never been called by this name, never signed it save under official compulsion when my "full name" was demanded, and literally nobody has ever known me by it. My paternal grandfather was James, but he died before I was born. With such a common name, chance alone ought to give fully so much.

The conditions were getting better, Feda stated; and two or three spirit friends were here to speak to me. Among them was a young lady, medium or even slender in build, with face slightly oval and little color. The skin was clear and smooth, the features regular, the chin round, the mouth medium with full lips, the hair brown—pretty hair, curving away from the face, well taken care of and rather silky in appearance. There were brown arched brows and a square, open forehead. She was kind and sympathetic. She had passed over young. She had not been strong; she had had an internal weakness of some sort, and had gone over quickly.

This visitor, Feda stated, showed a small picture of herself, and drew a circle around this. She will help me find this picture. It is rather a good likeness, though showing her perhaps a bit too heavy. It is almost a full face. She had felt that she had longer to live on earth, and had not wanted to go. M. is with her; he (or she) had helped very much (presumably at the other's death).

This description and message mean absolutely nothing to me. The picture is again "old stuff;" every second spirit that presents himself at a seance, apparently, has something to say about a photograph, and usually about a lost photograph that is going to be found with his aid. The hardened skeptic would infer that this is said so often because it is so extremely safe. Who am I to say that some deceased person, whom I may or may not recognize or think I recognize, did not have a likeness which is missing and will turn up some day?

I think it also fair to criticize the vogue of initials in spirit communications. The believers tell us that the hardest thing to get through the channels of spirit intercourse is a name of any description. They tell us that usually it is impossible to get the name through on its merits; but that a letter or a string of letters can be got through. It seems to me that the name of a letter is as much a name as the name of a man; or, if I am overruled here, that letters come through with sufficient freedom and apparent ease to leave no excuse for not spelling out the names and getting *them through*. The skeptic will agree with all these points, and add his own explanation, to the effect that, obviously, the chances of making a hit or a near-hit are vastly greater with a mere initial than with a specific name, for the very sufficient reason that the initial covers so much more ground.

The unidentified lady whose message to me

elicits the above criticism was now joined by a man—young, tall, straight, rather slight. The head and face were well-shaped, Feda said; and he was strong of jaw and chin. After informing me that he had a large mouth, she addressed an aside to him, inquiring whether he minded her saying this of him. His reply, if any were made, was by means of the inaudible technique. A little before he had passed on, he had had a choky feeling and could barely breathe; then he commenced feeling better but not for long. His features were regular, the bridge of the nose sharp, the nose itself straight and broad of base. The mouth was wide, the chin squared, the jaw "nice" but thin. Lines ran from the nose to the corners of the mouth. The eyes were blue or blue gray, the brows brown, straight and rather well-marked. As Feda went on to state that his forehead was pretty high, the spirit's impatience to get past this descriptive stuff and get along with his message was very pronounced, but Feda suppressed him unceremoniously. His hair was a neutral brown, brushed back or grown back to show the temples. Brushed back and up, she amplified—straight up; and short at the back and the sides. The ears were "good," through a bit large; they turned out at the tip—down and out in a way which seemed to catch and hold Feda's attention. She was sure that a photograph of him, if available, would show these ears. The neck was long. In

general appearance the visitor was well built, even though impressing Feda as of a thinnish trend.

Now at last she gave the right of way to his message. He has been very anxious to get in touch with me. He puts his hand to the side of his head—to the left temple. It doesn't hurt him now, but it did while he was on earth. He knew me very well. He passed suddenly. Not in a minute, Feda explained, but he had only just time enough to understand that something was happening. He didn't realize what it was, until presently he found himself on the other side. He keeps building up a letter H, which seems to join him and me in some way. My recollection of him ought to tie up with a building—a high building—a good way up, a room near the top. It's not a pretty building, but bare; it stands near or on a corner. Not here, she hastened to add, or near here; a long way off (necessarily). It is near a bridge (this under prompting of the direct whisper. He has been to me, since he passed; has been to me before, and tried to say something about this. Did I realize that he was trying to speak through . . . through . . . through the trumpet, Feda flubbing this badly and having to be prompted by the direct whisper again. This presumably, if in good faith, referred to one of the Sloan seances, where numerous unidentified trumpet voices were momentarily present; or, if in bad faith, would be based upon the very

easy guess that one coming to Mrs. Leonard would not stop there.

An older man, now with him, was present on this other occasion as well, and tried to speak at the same time. He knows me, too. Something was said, but got mixed up, and I took both for one. Both were there and trying to make me understand.

Before this occasion, Feda went on, he had been with me in a different place—a different town. The ambiguity of this statement is Feda's, not mine. As the message unfolded, it seemed probable that the younger man, first there, was still speaking.

At the time to which he was referring I had been undecided in mind between two movements, not knowing what to do. (This was more blank-form stuff; the spirits are always picturing one as making a decision or as hesitating on the horns of a decision. And if one will but admit sufficiently trivial items, one, of course, always *is* in this state of mind. There cannot be an hour of conscious existence in which some sort of a choice is not made.) And he is going to another city with me soon. (Promises of this character are very frequent in the spirit message, however delivered; the idea, often explicitly put forward, is that the spirit will go with one about one's business, lending a helping hand at the rough spots.)

The incidents of this younger communicator's death might without great difficulty be fitted into

that of an uncle by marriage, for whom I cared somewhat more than the bare statement of his distant relationship would imply. He died when his chronic, rather harmless case of tuberculosis took a sudden shift into a virulent form. The "choky feeling" incident is recognizable; it occurred some days before death, and was followed by an immense improvement, a relapse, and death. The large mouth would apply, but the other details of head and face would at best be doubtful. The statement about his build would be a direct hit; he was a truckman, and really a very powerful man, but of that lean, rangy build that so deceives the eye. On the whole, however, I think the personal description would hardly pass as his; while the tall-building incident and all the rest is quite meaningless to me. My best judgment would be that, referred either to this uncle or to anybody else whom I have ever known, there is nothing about the present communicator which could not best be explained by appeal to the laws of chance; even if frankly guessing, Feda cannot well be 100 per cent wrong.

Feda next saw an older man standing with this one—whether the same older man referred to above was not indicated. He was much older—sixty years of age, or more. Feda referred this verdict to the spirit himself, got it corroborated, and expressed amazement at such a prodigious age. He had had heart and chest "conditions" for a long time before death, so

long before in fact that for some time he had not known of them at all. At the end there had been something in the nature of a stroke. He had been very active and energetic, but toward the end had had fits of depression, in which he had been afraid of a prolonged illness that would keep him from doing things with his accustomed freedom and energy. He had had a fine brain, which had been well used. His tentative identification with the previous elderly visitant was made more probable by the statement here that he, too, had been present at the incident of the confusion of trumpets.

If the medium, at a sitting of this sort, gets her impressions telepathically from the sitter, it would be quite in order to suppose that, sometimes, she would get a patchwork of impressions that really apply to different persons, and work them together into a fictitious personality. I can recognize every positive statement of the above paragraph as having application to myself or to some acquaintance, living or dead; but I am very far indeed from applying them all to any one person whom I have ever known. In a single case this does not constitute any evidence at all in favor of this patching together of telepathic impressions; if the experience were often repeated, I should say that the reverse might come to be the case.

This person, actual or fictitious, now was attempting to communicate with me, Feda said. He holds up a paper, and indicates that he will

help me in this connection (omnibus stuff again). Once more he shows the paper—a picture, it is—as though he were going to inspire me in regard to writing something. Not a story like a novel, about dutchesses and such (a very neat bit of childish impersonation this, whether in good faith or borrowed from "Alice in Wonderland" or "The Young Visiters"); rather, an article, a special kind of story bearing upon the future.

At this point, Feda was reduced to the necessity of holding parley with her communicator, and the latter whispered something about "severed connections" which floored her completely, so that she had to suggest that if he couldn't tell her, maybe he could show her. This he did, and she reported that he was making motions indicating that I was about to break my link with some old business affairs. Living people rather than departed ones were involved, and something connected with the business world. Entirely new conditions—that awful word!—were to come, and much better ones for me, because under them I should have more scope. Feda made the communicator reassure her several times that he didn't mean more soap. Getting the word and the idea behind it at length, she went on to the effect that I had not heretofore had the right scope in the mental and spiritual sense. I have not been allowed to express myself in accord with the full capabilities that I have within me. That's what all these

communicators are going to help me with. The old things have been all right up to now, but I myself have been feeling that I was approaching a crisis. In this I am right; I am standing at the most critical period of my whole life. (We have been following a standard formula for some time, it will be realized; and in particular, no spirit message is official without something approaching the last statement.) These communicators are going to help me bring out my powers. Feda inquired whether they meant psychic powers, whether I were to become a medium. No, not psychic powers, was the answer; intellectual powers. I have not had the field most suited to those which I possess. The spirits feel that they must stop my being so sensitive to people and conditions—there we have it some more—so that I shall get on well in the new *conditions* which they predict. They are changing my whole *conditions* and getting them right. I have felt unsettled, have felt that in a way I was cutting the ground from under my own feet; but I have been impelled to go ahead and do this.

I pause here, to remark that this picture of me as a shrinking violet, highly sensitive to all sorts of delicate "conditions," is just about as whole-hearted a miss as any spirit ever made.

I must get some writing belonging to this communicator, Feda tells me. A book seems to constitute a very strong link between him and me. In great bewilderment, Feda now asked him

what in the world it was that he was trying to show her. Oh, yes; he belonged to something, some kind of society. A society of very special people, not of everybody indiscriminately. He shows a kind of badge symbolic of this society—an arrangement of leaves running around something in a partial circle. There are words, too, but Feda can't see them to read them; I may not think, now, what it is, but may find out afterwards. Until she got down to actual description of this emblem, it seemed as though she might be hitting pretty close to my Phi Beta Kappa or Sigma Xi membership, though I know of no bonds connecting me with any dead person through these.

The older gentleman who is responsible for all this, as I have indicated, I fail completely to identify. He now fades out of the picture. The letter W appears, but it is not made clear what if anything it has to do with the last or the next communicator. A friend of the elderly visitant, a very great friend indeed, now takes part in the sitting. He is not sure that I know of the friendship in question, but I will learn of it and link all this up. He, too, is an elderly man, but just passed over. The name Horace is given, without any categorical statement that it is his. (With or without a name, I fail completely to recognize him.) I will think of another H later on, but I must keep Horace separate. A repeated, stumbling effort to give a last name ensues, culminating in Feda's decision

that Parker or Perkins or something of the sort is intended. It has to do with the pictures—not the ordinary ones, but the moving pictures. I am to remember this; I shall very soon be talking with some one about the movies, and the connection will then develop. I may not see the importance of all this at the moment, but it will all come out.

I certainly did not see its importance or even its connection at the time, nor do I yet. I have talked, since my European trip, with a large number of more or less intelligent motion picture magnates and semi-magnates, all eager to get something on the screen which would enable them to cash in on the current fever of interest in things psychic, and all anxious to have my advice and approval. There has never been said anything at any of these conferences indicating that their outcome was of the slightest importance to me, however, nor has there been involved anybody with the initial H, to such an extent as to leave any impression upon me.

A lady now appears, a deceased relative, making the sign of the cross. The initial M seems to be hers. She was a Roman Catholic—in Ireland, Feda thinks. The American connection (Mrs. Leonard, I should point out, knew me as an American) seems to be lacking, but Feda feels the link with Ireland. I ought to try to find out about this, it would be a good test. The name is M-A-R . . . ; and there it hung. Feda is

not sure that the lady was born a Catholic, but her Catholicism was keen and strong.

I think there are few families in which one would have to travel so far as in mine, in search of any tinge of Romanism. The Ireland, and the name that might be Mary or Maria or Margaret, are a very natural follow-up in the application of Catholicism to the family of one obviously of Anglo-Saxon stock. If one were to guess that there was a Catholic lady in my family, or ever had been one, the rest of this message would be a fairly natural consequence.

There now appears a James, related to the James in my family (the nearest such would be my paternal grandfather). The young lady who was here first keeps coming back, too; she wants to give me more. Agnes is mentioned several times by Feda; and, after a repetition of the lady's desire to give more, the name Cushman.

Agnes Cushman, of course, is the girl whose photograph, secured by her father at a sitting with Mrs. Deane, presents about as evidential a case of "psychic photography" as has yet been recorded. At the time, I had not become acquainted with this case, but have learned of its details since. Whether in connection with this fact or whether isolated therefrom, the delivery of her name would seem no more pertinent than the delivery of George Washington's.

Perhaps in telepathic response to my feeling of complete non-recognition, Feda goes on to say that the young lady who is so anxious to

give me a further message is not Agnes. She is a very different person, an extremely beautiful spirit, who feels an interest in the bad conditions—I use this word only where Feda herself did so—about me. I am going to see somebody who will talk about her. She has been trying to get through a psychic portrait of herself. She will soon come to me. She keeps on putting a circular photograph in front of me (instead of drawing a circle about it, as on her original appearance; and nothing is now said to indicate that it is a portrait of herself). This portrait has nothing to do with the little girl who passed on, connected with my family. (This allusion scores a clean miss, so far as my knowledge goes, though the element of chance must be strongly in its favor.) This was a child, a little girl; her death was not recent (telepathic response to the thought embodied in the last parenthesis?), but she has been growing up in the spirit world, and developing. She had not much earth life. She would have been fair, with light blue eyes and golden hair (an inference from my own pronounced fairness?); she is related to me, but older (necessarily, if my failure to place her registered with Feda). She died at birth or very shortly after, so that Feda thinks she may never have had a name at all (a further scramble for safety?). She is looking directly at me, and trying to show me something that she holds (a curiously common tendency on the part of all my visitors at this sitting). I

shall be led somewhere where I shall have another sitting, and she will try again to come.

The latter remark was one of several efforts by Feda to stimulate my interest in clairvoyance. I regard these as the most objectionable and most questionable feature of the entire sitting. If I go to a fifty-cent clairvoyant in a circus side-show, I expect that the "control" will cap the "medium's" game; at the hands of a medium of Mrs. Leonard's standing I look for something better than this. Still, condemnation must not be too sweeping; if the performance is in good faith, Mrs. Leonard is innocent, even though Feda turn out to be a sheer invention of her subconsciousness.

The man (which one not indicated) has also been disappointed with this sitting. He had hoped for a long talk with me. He also will try again (if he gets another chance!).

Feda now launched into another detailed personal description. So much of what she said about this visitor might be applied to a fairly close deceased relative that I must comment upon this possibility with reference to each item as I bring it up. In view of the unpleasant things which I must say about him, I refrain from specifying his identity further. From my viewpoint, he should not communicate with me; from his, doubtless he would attempt it.

There was a gray beard, and deep eyes with straight, strong brows. Where the eyebrows sit, the forehead projects, making the brows

prominent; this effect is heightened by the fact that the brows themselves are of long and coarse hairs (all very applicable). The mouth was described but my notes are illegible on this item. A heavy line draws the brows together (I cannot comment on the accuracy of this). The under lip shows a bit in spite of the beard (correct), and is somewhat full (decidedly so). The face had fallen away at the cheeks a bit before decease (this appearance was normal as far back as I knew him).

Arrived on the other side, the subject got younger, and finds it a great pleasure to feel so well and strong. He sensed that he was going, a bit before his time (the first clause probably correct, the last certainly not). He had been extremely active and energetic, and could have lived for some time on his will power if he had had just a little more physical strength to back it up (in line with his make-up, but that it is in accord with the facts at the time of his death I doubt). He was kind, though in some ways a bit obstinate (the latter, surely; the former, hardly). He was very firm in his opinions (more than firm), feeling that right is right and wrong is wrong and that there is no middle ground for compromise (a clean miss; right and wrong were a matter of complete indifference to him). He was not always laughing, by any means; but he had a great sense of humor in his own peculiar way. He would say funny things without laughing at

them (doubtless correct; that is my impression, without recollection of anything definite on which it is based). He had a good many books about him, and a large writing table like a bureau. He used to sit here and make notes—not actually writing, but he would look into a book, and then scribble a note. (This description might apply to an old-fashioned writing desk at which he spent much time at the period when I saw most of him, but the occupation is all wrong. All he ever did at this desk was write letters, and sort and count thousands of used postage stamps which he was accumulating.)

Before he died he got a little better—at least, they said he was better (a clean hit; he died after his family had been informed that he was rallying). He had been unconscious (I believe this is correct, and that it applies to a time not too long prior to death to make the reference reasonable). He had been troubled about his legs, about an uncomfortable condition there (for several years prior to his death he was complaining about all sorts of things, and I have no doubt the legs were included). He complained; nobody knew what to do about it; therefore nothing was done; and so he worried (an extraordinarily accurate reflection of his attitude toward the treatment he got at the sanitarium in which he spent his last few years). It wasn't rheumatism, but rather a peculiar crampy feeling; at times it was pretty bad (I cannot testify here). He had hurt his head (I

doubt it), and suffered from congestion (probably), which depressed him (he was greatly depressed at intervals before his death); he ought to have had good health, because (whispered prompting) he had always had a healthy physique (correct in the sense that he had extraordinary resistance to sickness; he was one of those people who are continually fighting off sickness or semi-sickness, with a degree of success beyond what their apparent physical powers would forecast. Not strong physically, he had a concrete-and-steel constitution.)

He always wanted to be doing something (I believe, correct). He worried about material affairs (as they concerned himself, perhaps true); he wanted things right, in particular for three people who were close to him. (This is correct as regards the number of people in his immediate family, for 25 years prior to his death. Otherwise it is grossly inaccurate. The last thing he ever worried about was the support of his family, which fell entirely upon others as long as I knew him.) He was afraid things might not turn out as well as he wanted (he was in fact distinctly pessimistic in all things). Something was said about "getting rid of," but Feda couldn't make this go and had to abandon it. He had had to go, and didn't mind much; would have liked to remain in the earth life, but took it philosophically. He had had connections with a place a long way off (with at least two such places, but this would be a fairly safe

hazard in any event), and his thoughts were there (which I doubt). He had been making arrangements for someone to visit him by means of a long journey, but passed on before this was done. (He had been seeking this visit, but the arrangements were not his to make. The visit was actually made before his death.) He had mixed himself up in a controversy, expressing his views too strongly, in a way which afterwards he concluded had not been wise (I cannot check the repentance, but the rest hits off very well an incident arising out of his criticism of the sanitarium management. This was not a matter of business, but something different (correct, it will be noted). He found that his attitude had been a mistaken one, but found it hard to give in (emphatically, he would have found it hard to do so).

The next item is not at all applicable; he was a man of essentially narrow interests. In direct contradiction of this, Feda stated that he was greatly interested in world conditions now, and would enormously like to be here. He is trying to help from the spirit world. He had very strong ideas about war (I am sure he had no ideas at all on this subject), and is now working to aid in the prevention of war.

He had not had very definite ideas about life on the other side; would not have liked sittings and mediums, would have said "be careful." Had an open mind, but no great belief in personal survival (as a matter of fact, I don't be-

lieve he ever gave these topics a thought, or could have been induced to do so). After death, when he woke up, his first thought was not at all that he had passed on, but that he had been asleep. He couldn't understand that he had passed over. The first thing that convinced him that he had gone through the great change was the sight of several relatives whom he knew to have gone before. A practical man, he made up his mind to adapt himself, and to find out what kind of a life it was. (Rather like him.) Now he wouldn't come back.

I have an entry about him, Feda says, in "the note book." I do not remember it, but it is so, I have a little reference to him in "a note book." The change from definite to indefinite article is Feda's. Just as though I had written something about him. (This looks like another omnibus shot; it scores a complete zero. I don't believe I have such a memorandum about *any* dead person, or any place in which to keep one.)

George: he keeps speaking of George. (George is on earth, apparently, and the only George who might apply is dead.) He is always going to see George, to help him and improve him. He is anxious for me to write all this down, for he does not want me to think this is telepathy. He explains that he, and everybody else who is communicating with me today, are making an effort to tell me things that I could not have known, or thought of, or remembered; that this

is what they always have to do to escape the charge of telepathy.

This is a very appropriate statement to address to me, and evidential to the extent that my preference for the telepathic hypothesis surely had not been mentioned to Mrs. Leonard. But the communicator overlooked the fact that this statement itself, as well as the program which it outlines, do not necessarily prove anything save the very telepathy they were designed to disprove. However, with this reservation, the remark seems to me about as evidential as anything presented during the seance.

This George person is going on with what the communicator was interested in on earth. He is helping George; but he feels that it is hardly necessary for me to make an effort to verify this, since I will learn of it in the ordinary course of events.

He now mentions the name Alfred (quite unidentified). Perhaps to meet this thought, he goes on to say that he doesn't suppose I know who Alfred is. Alfred is dead, and he and Alfred are together a good deal. On earth, too, they were together much in a place beginning with B (if this means anything, it means Brooklyn, where the subject of my interpolated remarks lived for many years). Alfred has been dead for some time.

The communicator was here sharply interrogated by Feda, who wanted to know why he was trying to take my glasses off. (This was not

a physical phenomenon ; my glasses displayed no tendency to come off.) She passed the explanation along to me. He was magnetizing the top of my head and strengthening my eyes (the very fact of my wearing glasses ought to be sufficient stimulus for this in the medium's subconsciousness). I will find that he will be able to do me a great deal of good. He is helping the focussing, which is not quite right. One eye is worse than the other (emphatically true, but I believe the oculist will tell us that it applies to a large majority of his cases). He tells Feda that it is nothing in the eye, or on the eye, and she asks him what it is, then. He says it is a slight nerve weakness in the back of the eye, which he will be able to fix. (He is a bad diagnostician ; it is a very pronounced case of astigmatism.) He is not magnetizing (another very unsatisfactory word) the front of my eyes, but is trying to put the power inside of my head. The nerves of my head and brain are extremely sensitive and it is difficult to stop me from thinking (this is rather good ; I cannot make my mind a "blank" without much struggle). But he is working on a nerve away back of the eye, and it can be adjusted. It has nothing to do with the retina. Something there is pulled a little too tight, has too great tension (Feda stumbled on this word, though she had not balked in the least on "retina.") He's going to release this, and later I will find that I can do without glasses. (This, in view of the nature of my trouble, would

be a regular, full-blown miracle cure. I have no doubt that a very goodly percentage of the be-spectacled people who sit with a medium of Mrs. Leonard's type get the same promise.)

This communicator now went away; and it is time to review briefly the possibility that, through telepathetic plumbing of my store of recollections of him or through his actual survival and communication or through any other channel, he really did represent the person with whom I have tentatively identified him. He certainly represented nobody else. Some—many, perhaps—of the items of correspondence might have been accidental, shrewd guesses, etc. But, making due allowance for all this, and taking into consideration the fact that a number of things were said that were dead wrong as applied to him, it seems to me there is still considerably too much correspondence to be explained on any casual ground. But judgment on this sort of thing is very difficult, and I should not care to push this suggestion too strongly.

An Indian now presented himself—the seance would be incomplete without one. Feda rather supports her own character as an East Indian by specifying that the new visitor is “an American Indian, not an East Indian.” The fellow is tall and large—enormous, in fact. He has great power and is interested in me. He has great healing power. He has talked about me with Belle. Do I know Belle? No? Belle is

Mrs. Britton's control. I ought to go to Mrs. Britton; this Indian would be described to me.

A gentleman appears, and says my "guides" (we all have spirit guides, according to the true faith, whether we be mediums or not) have been trying before now to impress me on the subject about which he means to talk with me. There had been a possibility of my coming to Mrs. Leonard sooner—a couple of years ago, or maybe three (this is most emphatically not so). He knew that ultimately I should come to her. I have the power to speak on this subject (the one he is coming to?), but haven't developed my abilities to do so. The spirits can develop me, so that they could speak through me—in normal fashion, not in trance or through control (presumably by inspiring me). But they are not going to do this. It would be bad for me. I have my normal life to lead, and must develop normally. I must do my writing (Mrs. Leonard could hardly have known my profession); and under their inspiration, there is much more for me to do than ever before. In fact, I shall soon learn to discriminate between their inspirations and my own ordinary productions. The gentleman who is speaking has a great deal of inspiration which he wishes to work off (my expression, not his) through me. Feda demands to know why, and gets no satisfaction.

Mr. Stead now appears. Feda informs me that he doesn't often manifest through her, but that she is now getting him very strongly. (I

couldn't resist a wicked impulse to wonder whether she told everybody that. The fact is, one rather good authority on this sort of thing regards Stead's appearance at a seance as ground for strong suspicion; he looks at it as a sort of standard trick—like holding out an ace, I suppose.) Stead is much interested in what the spirits are doing for me, and he can and will help. Not just because I am here, but for more personal reasons and in a quite personal way. He will give further proof of this. Perhaps I wonder why I am singled out for such attention by him? I am eventually to do much work in the spiritist movement, hence he takes an interest in me. (An effort to cater to the supposed desires of the sitter?)

The next communication, which came without any definite signing off on Stead's part, expressed disappointment over a photograph. Feda had to be prompted over this. Not an ordinary photograph was meant, but a spirit photo. Did I know that he wanted me to get his face? Would I try again? But I must ask some one else to help. Estelle would be good, but I must not tell her with whom the previous attempt was made.

This looks altogether like a false inference that if I were the sort of person who would come to Mrs. Leonard, I must be the sort of person who would already have tried the spirit photographers. The fact is, I had not done so, and at this time had not even an appointment to

do so, though later I did sit with Hope. I asked Feda where I might find Estelle, and was told at the British College. I wondered whether Estelle and Belle were in the habit of returning Feda's professional favors, or whether cash commissions are the vogue on the other side.

The communicator went on to assure me that he was certain this effort through Estelle would be successful. It will be wonderful to get a successful picture and have it enlarged, for comparison with his lifetime photo. Of these, there is an excellent one showing head and shoulders, not quite full face. He will try to get a spirit one like this, although, prompting Feda vocally, he reminds her that the clothes will of course be different. Occasionally in life he wore long, robe-like garments, and has been photographed in these. Not a uniform, he cautions. He is trying to show what it was like by pulling his coat down longer. He had a good photo in this garment—a full length, it was. Don't forget about George; it's very important. This is apparently a reference back to a previous communication from another source (page 000), and might bear rather strongly upon the theory that the entire body of material is pieced together subconsciously by Mrs. Leonard. It would be far easier to have confusion in this way, I should think, than in any other, between two communicators who were not present at the same moment.

This same communicator, still totally unidentified, next asked me whether I knew that not

long ago he had thought that I was about to have an accident. In a car, it had been; and just for a moment the accident had seemed to impend. Quite lately, it was; near a corner, a corner where a street goes around. There wasn't enough room; there was something in the way. I had been calculating, just before; calculating whether I should have time for something. It happened and was over, quite quickly. In response to my query, Feda said that apparently I was not driving, myself; but the rest of the tale contradicted this flatly. (If I were not driving, the whole incident is apocryphal, I should be certain.) It was not my fault, but still the communicator thought of asking me to be more careful another time. A slight error in judgment appeared to have been involved. There seemed to have been a lamp near the point in question; he wasn't sure whether it was lighted or not, and agreed with me that if it were not I shouldn't have seen it. The spot didn't seem to be a very familiar one; he at least had not been there before. He did not indicate to what extent he was accustomed to accompany me in my automo-bumming. But it was certainly not a place to which I was accustomed to go. Don't forget that calculation of time, he urged me, in trying to identify the occasion. And there seemed to have been something about a change of route, just before or just after. He had a feeling at the time that I should have come a different way; and I, too,

heard something later that made me think so.

I never realized, until I came to check this tale against my automobiling background, how many fairly narrow escapes from accident I have had. And curiously enough, practically every item he mentions figures in one or another of them. Not all, or nearly all, of these circumstances are involved in any one incident which I recognized as an escape from disaster; but it looks very much as though there had been built up a complex of all the near-wrecks I have had.

The communicator went on to assure me that he was going with me in a car again. Outside London, he particularized. He will go along and look after me. He emphasized that the occasion to which he was now referring was not to be in town, but out where there were hills, and green (that's where I do most of my driving, all right). Not on the hill itself, he continued, but approaching a slope. A little afterwards I should be on the hill, with good slopes up ahead, and a bit of wood left just behind. He enjoyed that (the slip from future into past is as per the text of his discourse). He was wondering whether something was not a little stiff about the car. Not all the time, but just now and again. Here Feda interrupted him to remark what a nuisance it was that I couldn't sit often. She is afraid that I shall not be here long, that something will take me away, though I shall possibly return a bit later. Yes; I shall

be a distance away, and shall then come back.

I have been so very faithful about getting in every adverse point, that in fairness to the psychic cause, I suppose I ought to make a confession, apropos of the present communicator's announcement that he drives more or less with me, looking after me. Usually I know, long before the driver ahead gives any signal or other tangible indication of his program, whether he is going to stop or turn out. If I deliberately take thought and ask myself what he aims to do, this fails; but if I just sense his presence on the road, and the presence of a possible turning point ahead of him, it hardly ever does. The thing is far too reliable for coincidence. Naturally I have always attributed it to telepathy; but if anybody is going to talk about spirit guidance of my driving, in all fairness he ought to have this bit of data.

This automobiling communicator was now displaced by a lady who called herself M. In many respects she, like the elderly gentleman of some pages back, seems identifiable, and this time I need not hold out on my readers in the matter of her identity. She would be my maternal grandmother, who was a member of the same household with me from my birth until her death when I was nineteen. Her name was Margaret. Before attributing too much to this particular hit, we ought to remember that what with Mary, Margaret, Maria, Mabel and Minnie not to mention less frequent ones like Marian

and Martha, this must be by far the commonest initial for a woman's first name.

The communicant was a bit above medium height (rather, a bit below), with oval face, thin cheeks, and little color—quite pale, in fact (all very good). She has a pretty chin (this I cannot check), the skin drooping somewhat beneath it (true at her age when I knew her). The mouth seems tired, with pale lips of medium size (neither notably a bit nor notably a miss). The nose is characterized as fine-shaped and narrowish (it was in reality my grandmother's most conspicuous feature, being a very prominent Roman one; but withal, as I recollect it, the term "narrowish" would not be entirely inapplicable). The brows are brown and darkish (unable to check this); the hair is grayish (actually white in my ultimate recollection, but I believe graying before that), and is smoothed back from the forehead and sides of the head and coiled high (rather a mixture of her earlier and later modes of hair-dressing).

Judging from all the "-ishes" here employed, Feda would appear to have been confronted by a very neutral personality. This would be quite out of character with my grandmother.

She is dressed well but plainly (good). She seems to have taken special care of her head (this means nothing to me). Her hair looks younger than she does (if anything, the reverse was true). She is a very patient and painstaking person, who must always have everything

just right (a bulls-eye). Her nerves were in a delicate state for two or three years before passing (she died of general senile decay, and I doubt that her nerves were as much affected as her more purely physical functions). She tried to keep up, even when she was not well (nothing could be truer). She had a pain in her side (intermittently, following her being run over, some ten or fifteen years prior to death), and easily took cold, with coughing, etc. (this I do not find in my recollections of her). She seems a bit bent, with head forward (bad), but this is not natural; she held herself well before her illness. (During her entire illness she was confined to her bed, so all this is rather pointless.)

She indicates that I have, not here but in a place where I can go and look at it, a photo showing her hair parted in the middle (I have not such a photograph, but one exists for which this description would be valid). There is white lace drapery around the bodice, and on the breast a large oval brooch with twisted pattern. (The details of this I cannot check, but I have a very distinct recollection of having often seen her with such drapery, and she certainly had a large oval brooch—the twisted pattern I doubt. I need not emphasize the essentially grandmotherly character of this description; if Feda were inventing an elderly female relative, she could not do better than this, on general grounds.)

Of this brooch she was very fond, Feda goes on to say, and had had it for many years (the

latter correct, and presumably the former also). It had belonged to a deceased relative (quite likely correct). The picture shows her dressed in old-fashioned style, with a black dress and a band of lace about the collar (the comments of the preceding paragraph, favorable and unfavorable alike, apply equally here). She wears a full long skirt, which seems to have Feda's hearty approval. She didn't take well to new ideas (as a rule she didn't, but every once in a while she would startle us with a progressive move; the statement would apply, on general grounds, to the sort of person whom Feda is obviously dealing with). She was sympathetic, charitable, and kind (all of that). She wouldn't waste a penny; she saved everything and put it away in drawers, etc. (this is a picture drawn from life!). She would do anything to help in trouble (again a direct hit).

She caresses me, hand on head, as though I were a little boy (to my grandmother, of course, I would be). The initials E., J. and W. are given separately, as though of different persons. They are those of her family people near her, a little group. (E. could be my mother, J. one of my grandmother's brothers or one of her sisters-in-law, W. I do not so easily place; but under the most favorable interpretation it would be impossible to make her "family group" out of this combination of initials.) She is not the sort of person who would be content to sit idle and order servants about, but always would do

things herself. (This simply has *got* to be my grandmother; I've known servants to leave us because she was always thus getting under their feet!) She sewed, cooked, etc. She often comes now to look after me. She is fond of a place not in the town, but in the country (this might be any one of several places; too vague for satisfactory comment). A house by itself, it is, on a good piece of ground, with gardens and flowers (I can only say there were such places in my grandmother's life, and, if she really is haunting me as here implied, it might also be my present residence!). An attempt to name the place gets only as far as W-O-O-D. . . . (and means nothing to me). I mustn't try to think of it now, I must let it come back. She has been eager to get to me, but can't give much. She refers to a group photograph, three of them, she in the center. (This I do not place; but my mother is pretty sure there was a picture of my grandmother, my aunt, and my cousin now deceased, taken at Rockaway and meeting exactly the description.) It was taken, Feda went on, many years ago; all the sitters were of the family, and the other two were younger than her. It was taken at a place by the sea. It will take time for me to verify all this (it did!).

I should think, on the whole, that this was an even more satisfactory attempt to present my grandmother than the previous one was to present my less well-thought-of relative. There is considerable that is wrong, ambiguous or

questionable; but there are so many things that are square hits that I am decidedly impressed by the performance as a whole.

Feda complained that she was losing the power—"what a nuisance!" She had employed this expression quite often. The lady and a gentleman send love. He is going to use every possible means in his power to get through to me, and is sure he can do so now more easily. He will use the trumpet again some Tuesday. (This is one of Sloan's regular days at the College. The remark might be taken as another bit of advertising. Incidentally, I did not again sit on a Tuesday at a trumpet seance at the College.) He will be interested, and will want to be with me. He smiles as though—Feda gives a pantomime to emphasize the point—as though he had something up his sleeves. Before I go back (to America?) I must have another talk with Feda (at thirty shillings per talk). Meantime this other journey, this short journey that is taking me temporarily away—what a nuisance!

I am going to develop, Feda knows I am.

I must get something for myself. I have had impressions about people and events, but haven't paid much attention to them. I must do so, must think of this revelation, must gain confidence.

Good bye. Faint whispers followed, gradually dying out. There ensued a sound like water running through a pipe—Feda withdraw-

ing, I suppose. All was quiet for a time. Then suddenly the medium was awake, yawning prodigiously, as she always does, she explains. The sitting had lasted two hours; my hand and my pencils were completely done in.

And there we are. I have given this complete transcript mainly because there is not, so far as I know, easily accessible to the lay reader, anything that gives a clear idea of what such a sitting as this is like, in its entirety. It seems to me that this should be made good; and especially that the chaff should be included with the wheat, so that one can make an intelligent judgment as to just how much of the time the control is really delivering the goods, and just how much of the time she is apparently talking against time. If it is read with due emphasis upon the messages, and with only such attention to the personal asides of the sitter as is necessary to form the proper judgment upon the character of the messages, it seems to me that, in spite of its possibilities of tedium, it ought to be interesting.

As to its character, the most rabid spiritist will grant that, in this sitting, there is no evidence of survival. In view of the very large amount of irrelevant material—visitors whom I fail to recognize after the most elaborate description, incidents which mean literally nothing to me, etc.—I am not at all sure that the possibility of interpreting two of my communicants as relatives would give any standing to the

seance, if this were the only evidence available on which to form a judgment of Mrs. Leonard's work. But there is enough of her work with other sitters on record, to make it seem as certain as any single conclusion in the whole field of psychic research, that she possesses genuine power of some sort. What, then, is the nature of this power?

I think my experiences give more pertinent data upon this question with reference to the present medium than with reference to any other with whom I sat. They suggest most strongly a power to abstract telepathically the facts of the sitter's past experience. This procedure must almost necessarily, it would seem to me, lead in some cases to a confusion of impressions — perhaps merely a confusion between the sitter's mental pictures of his various acquaintances of the past and the present, perhaps actually a confusion between elements derived by the medium from the sitter and elements derived from other sources. Such "other sources" would unquestionably include her own subconsciousness, and in my opinion as to the possible range of telepathy they would also include third parties, not present and having no particular connection with either the medium or the sitter. Whatever limits one places upon the possibilities of this telepathetic broadcasting, it seems to me that *my* experience with Mrs. Leonard is best met by assuming that Feda is merely the medium's subconsciousness, or perhaps a dual per-

sonality, feeding out a complex web woven of elements which the medium has taken in through the telepathic faculty.

If this is the case, she certainly ought to get the most impressions, and the most vivid ones, from her sitter, himself. With this in view, I have commented upon the identification of the several communicators wholly from my own store of memories regarding the deceased relatives whom they bring to my mind. It is probable that some of my remarks are contrary to fact, and certain that some of them would be modified if I were to submit them to living relatives who knew the dead ones in question.

And then if you ask me what I mean by telepathy, I shall have to say that I do not know. It is a subject for future investigation. Prior to such investigation, it stands merely as a blank form, a word representing a process of whose occurrence I am convinced, of whose occurrence more and more people are becoming convinced every day, but regarding whose exact nature, scope and *modus operandi* we know literally nothing, and can only hypothesize. This we are free to do, *ad lib.*, if we but remember that we are hypothesizing and not dealing with demonstrated facts. The bare occurrence of the phenomenon of telepathy, is so strongly pointed to by a vast quantity of known facts, however, that it can almost be regarded as itself such a fact.

## CHAPTER IX

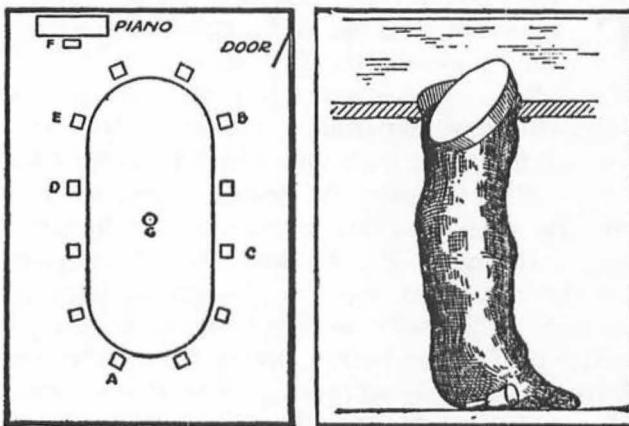
### A NOISY EVENING IN THE SUBURBS

FOLLOWING the Leonard sitting and a week-end with Sir Arthur at Crowborough came a seance on the evening of Monday, March 5th., which in some respects was the most extraordinary experience of my entire trip. The group is a private one, which I was told had been sitting weekly for seven years, with no change in the regular personnel and hardly a single absence. Mr. Engholm is my authority for the statement that the phenomena have undergone practically no development during the entire period, the seance having almost the fixed form of a ritual—so much so that it is a source of amazement to him that the sitters do not weary of it. Outsiders are not ordinarily admitted; but Sir Arthur's influence opened the door for himself and his friend from America.

The rendezvous was at a tiny grocery store on the extreme outskirts of London. Sir Arthur and I arrived last, and the proprietor promptly put up his shutters and conducted us to his dining room upstairs, where the sittings are always held. Aside from the chairs, the only furniture worthy of note was the extension table and a piano. Of the thirteen sitters, one remained outside at the piano, in the corner of the room; the other twelve formed the conventional circle

at the table, with hands joined and on the table.

There was no medium in the usual sense. Nobody went into trance, nor stood out otherwise, save that more of the talking with the controls



A: Mr. Bird. B: Sir Arthur's seat, to which he was moved from D or E. C: The proprietor of the premises. D: The young lady who behaved suspiciously during the climax of the seance. E: The pianist, outside the circle. G: The circular plate in the middle of the table; the drawing at the right shows the details of this, and of the attached bag.

The seance of Chapter IX, showing the seats occupied by those specifically mentioned in the text

was done by the proprietor than by anybody else, and all the duty of explanation to us was in his hands. Two of the regulars had to have certain fixed places at the table, and two others had to be opposite one another; it had been found by experiment and consultation with the controls that this was necessary for the proper

working of the psychic circuit. We had a little difficulty getting located in a manner preserving these requirements, and at the same time alternating the sexes so far as possible. But as soon as complete darkness was attained, the control demanded that Sir Arthur change his seat. I was not certain whether a simple interchange were effected, or whether several sitters shifted one place each, so as to occupy Sir Arthur's original chair and leave another vacant for him.

During the interval between the settling into place and the turning down of the gas I was able to take stock. A year or two before this date, the *Scientific American* had published a full page of pictures showing the noise-making paraphernalia of stage and screen. Glancing about the table I could think only of this. There was a most amazing array of apparatus scattered about, and clearly we were to have a noisy evening. Two tin-horn "trumpets," smaller than one usually meets at a seance, and in a single piece rather than collapsible, since they never had to be packed for travel; a small and a large bell of the clapper type that is rung by shaking in the hand; a mandolin; a drum, one head being of the usual membrane and the other of tin; drumsticks; a good-sized wooden mallet; a rather large four-legged stool; a wooden whistle of extraordinary size, with a pea inside to make the noise; a thick pad of paper and a couple of prodigious pencils—very caricatures upon pencils, they were; an electric

lamp assembled with its battery in a small wooden case, and with a piece of red felt stretched over its eye; a small slate, phosphorescent-painted on one side—that was all on the table. Underneath on the floor stood a music-box; and suspended in a loose loop from the leg of the table to a staple on the under side of the table-top was a strip of leather carrying a string of sleighbells.

As we took our seats, in the full gas-light, the sleighbells rang loudly. Hymn books stood at convenient points about the table, and with the full light two verses of “Onward, Christian Soldiers” were sung, together with three cantos of a hymn that was strange to me. The books were then collected, a candle lit and placed in a saucer on the table, and the gas extinguished. After more hymns in the semi-darkness, gentle raps were heard on the table. These continued intermittently throughout the seance. Questions were asked, orally, by the sitters, or remarks made, and answered by the raps: two raps, no; three raps, yes; four raps, good night. While the candle burned little action was had, however—none, in fact, save the raps and something from the sleighbells, until a high, shrill, piping voice issued from somewhere about the table.

This was Iris, the chief control, a little girl—an exotic of some sort. Sir Arthur had confused her with a negress, and was corrected in this. She indulged in violent, prolonged and fearfully shrill laughter at all times. She talked

loud and fast and freely, in a most disagreeably shrill tone, which Sir Arthur thought could hardly have been consciously maintained by a human voice for the necessary time. The circle joined without restraint in her laughter at her own humor and that of the sitters. Of both sorts there was a great deal; Iris wasn't a bit more of a riot than the sitters themselves.

Immediately Iris demanded that the light be dispensed with, and we sat in total darkness until near the end. I need not describe in sequence or in detail the noises that ensued, and that constituted the backbone of the seance. Every sound that could conceivably be produced on the instruments I have catalogued, we had, and had repeatedly throughout the sitting; and always the effort seemed to be to make just a little bit more of an infernal racket with a given tool than one would have supposed the tool to be capable of. Few of the effects produced were musical, most were distinctly unpleasant. The most ear-splitting were when an effort was made to throw the music-box through the floor, when the stool was lifted and banged violently upon the table-top, and when Iris put forth her best on the whistle. The entire evening was one prolonged six-ring circus.

Though Iris ran the seance, two other identities took part: John, the rapper; and Bell, the violently noisy member. In response to Sir Arthur's direct questions, John said that he was John King, alias the buccaneer Morgan, who

became Governor General of Jamaica; and that he was also the father of Katie King, Crookes' materializee. I find nothing in the reference books to indicate that Morgan's name was King, though the fact that he was kidnapped as a boy would render it possible. Morgan's date of death was 1688, and this might make the claim seem absurd on its face if we did not recall that Katie was supposed to be, not a human, but actually a materialized spirit. John's ordinary method of communication was through raps, which were the one mild and gentle feature of the seance—sometimes we had to listen hard to get them. I do not recall whether he gave his name orally, or whether it was put to him by a question so that he could rap the answer "Yes." My impression, however, is that this was done and that at no time did John speak.

Bell spoke occasionally, but his strong point was beating the drum, and he also dealt the table some fearful blows with mallet and stool. It was for his special delectation that the tin drum-head had been provided, and he used it with enthusiasm.

Save that the sleighbells were apt to go off at any time, and perhaps also with a reservation on behalf of John and his raps, I do not recall that any two pieces of apparatus were in simultaneous operation.

No attempt was made to receive messages of significance; the gathering with the spirits was purely a social affair. I asked Sir Arthur,

later, what religious consolation or spiritual satisfaction the sitters could find in this, which made them willing to carry on with it so regularly over such a period. I think this is a fair query, since the question of motive has to come into a discussion of possible fraud; and aside from this, even religion must be adequately motivated. We agreed that this was a rather puzzling problem in psychology; that in view of the unchanging nature of the phenomena from week to week and even from year to year, one would expect the sitters to tire of them. We finally agreed that they were probably of just sufficient intellectuality to take pleasure in the bald fact (as they regard it) of being able to communicate with the dead; and not sufficiently intellectual to become sophisticated in this connection. There was no variety in the mysterious rites of early religions, yet these persisted for generations.

The noises, however, were not all that happened. Iris, for instance, wrote messages on her pad, one for Sir Arthur and one for me. I could hear the pencil scratching its way over the pad, but could not locate this on the table. The completed message was torn off and thrust into the hand of the addressee. I had no sense of physical contact here, and no other objective impression that this was being done by one of the sitters. My message read: "Dere Mr. Bird, me is very pleased to meet you here tonight. Me thought you would like a few words from

me. Iris." The letters were formed characteristically like a child's script. The lines ran at eccentric angles, and two of them ran into one another; the margins at both sides were very uneven. All this was about what one might expect from a human writing in the dark. Sir Arthur's message was of much the same tenor as mine, and of very similar execution.

Iris could see better in the dark when wielding the trumpet than when using the pencil. What was designed to be her big stunt with this was passing it back and forth across the table, touching Sir Arthur and myself, in rapid alternation and with extreme accuracy, upon our left hands. As the diagram shows, we were almost directly opposite one another, the long way of the table. The successive contacts, as marked by our exclamations, were very close indeed, and all the sitters hailed the performance as highly indicative of genuine spirit manipulation of the trumpet. It did not seem rational to me that they could all so completely overlook or ignore the fact that two trumpets were on the table; in the presence of this fact, of course, the bottom falls right out of the demonstration.

Iris later gave, explicitly, an exhibition of her tugging ability. She brought the big end of the horn to my right hand, with no fumbling and yet with sufficient accuracy to permit my grasping it between thumb and finger, without moving my hand or my partner's, or releasing the latter. She pulled quite vigorously, and when I hung

on too keenly for her to get the trumpet away by straight pulling, she twisted it very neatly out of my grasp, with a loud guffaw. Later, she planted the big end of the trumpet with great accuracy and considerable delicacy against the exact point of my chest.

The red-screened lamp which I have described had a switch for turning it on and off. This switch was quite stiff—not, of course, really difficult to throw, but requiring a distinct push. While the lamp rested on the table Iris played freely with the switch, turning the light on and off repeatedly. The red felt blanketed the lamp extremely well so far as its giving any actual illumination was concerned; with the current flowing, all one saw was a dull circular spot of red. It did not even look like a light, and when it first appeared, it had to be interpreted to me.

Presently Iris picked the lamp up and began to move it about over the table and above our heads. Back and forth it went, up and down, in and out of the circle, smoothly and without any jerk, through wide sweeping curves and figures of eight, covering a very large range of territory. This went on for some time; to the best of my recollection, the lamp was never turned off or on while in motion. It would appear somewhere, at rest; it would travel about for a moment; it would then come to a stop, and be turned out again, or perhaps left burning. At times it moved at quite terrifying speed.

The request was made that Iris materialize

her hands, and she agreed to do what she could in this direction. After a while the slate was held up vertically, and a hand seen in shadowy silhouette against the ground of its phosphorescent surface. The fingers seemed altogether too thin and small for a human hand, and they were ill-shaped in the bargain. Iris did not think that she would be able to do any better than this, but under urging she went on, and presently announced that she was going to be able, after all, to make material contacts with her hands for Sir Arthur's benefit, and for mine. Presently Sir Arthur felt the touch of a finger-end upon the back of his hand; then it came to me in the same way. Here his observations and mine were not in agreement. He found the finger firm, but soft and velvety. If we were both touched by the same object, it seemed to me that this verdict must be the result of auto-suggestion built about the expectation of a child's finger; the contact that I got impressed me as quite coarse and hard. Sir Arthur also got more of an impression of smallness and delicacy than I did, especially in the case of the finger nail, which we both felt distinctly. If nothing had been said about the intentions here, I should have dismissed the incident with the idea that a male neighbor had touched me. It seems, as a matter of fact, that the divergent observations might best be explained on the supposition that we were both touched by a neighbor—but by different neighbors.

The phosphorescent slate was carried about the table, without the hand, and presented to each sitter. The smaller bell, coated inside with the same substance, likewise made the grand tour. Then the slate and the bell circulated together, the bell this time being tilted so that its luminous inside was hidden, while its dark exterior was silhouetted against the slate. Though it had rung freely on other occasions, the bell was silent on this final tour, suggesting to me that it was held by the clapper.

The grand climax was reserved for the end. John had rapped good-night, Iris had actually gone, and the bright light of the gas jet had been restored. I supposed that we were about to rise. But John, as is his custom, had remained for one final act, which I must describe in detail.

From the center of the table a circular piece some eighteen inches in diameter had been cleanly cut out. This piece had been preserved, intact; and it sat snugly in the hole from which it had been cut, like a plug or lid, the bearing surface being a bevelled edge that was carried clear around the circumference of the plug and the face of the hole in the table. On this bevel, a small hole of about a quarter-inch diameter had been bored, horizontally, into the table top; and from the edge of the circular panel a pin projected, fitting this hole. If one is to remove the circular plate, it looks as though this would have to be done parallel to the axis of the pin. Apparently, a mere random thrust from below,

upon the surface of the circular plate, would not with any certainty displace the plate against the locking action of the pin.

To the under side of the table, all around the edge of the circular gap, had been attached a bag of heavy fabric. Sir Arthur and I examined this, satisfying ourselves that it was quite tight all around its junction with the table, as well as throughout its own surface. It was long enough to drag upon the floor. In its bottom reposed a large bell with a loose clapper. The idea was obvious; the bag cannot be greatly agitated without causing the bell to ring.

As we sat about the table in full gaslight, the circular plate was repeatedly and violently jerked from its seat and thrust, tilted, out of the hole. After each spasm it came to rest in substantially the position in which it is pictured in the sketch of page 140. John was stated to be doing this; I asked "Is that you, John," and the plate responded "Yes" with three prodigious upheavals. One of the sitters was able to put the plate back in its seat again only by struggling hard against vigorous opposition. This business continued for five minutes or so, the motion of the plate getting weaker and less frequent all the time; when at length it refused to move any more, the sitting broke up.

So much for the phenomena produced. It is hardly necessary for me to point out that the complete darkness and the complete absence of any attempt at test conditions make it out of

order to pass any serious opinion about any manifestation save the final one. But there are a good many pertinent observations to be made.

It must be admitted that the phenomena were, for the most part, intrinsically far from impressive; and that the whole sitting had a very direct turn toward comedy, horse-play, and circus stuff. But it would not be fair to condemn it on that ground alone. We go to seances because we are ready to admit that perhaps there are some things about the physical world around us which we have still to learn. To justify this admission, which is altogether academic and general, one need only point out that to have withheld it a generation ago would have been to stop short of the wireless and the airplane. And if an unidentified force or agent is at work, we make a very large and unjustifiable assumption indeed when we demand that it produce results which shall appear dignified, and produce them in a fashion which shall appear dignified. Nobody ever asked whether an electric current was dignified; in fact it is anything but that, when one receives it unexpectedly and in the wrong way. One might as well demand that psychic phenomena be pink, or hexagonal, as that they be dignified; the term is irrelevant.

So we can well afford to admit that many of our results are on their own grounds unimpressive; and when they are actually funny we can join the laugh without the slightest loss. More serious is the admission that any of our results

are such that one or two of the sitters could have produced them deliberately, without any large hazard of detection. In the present instance, it was my impression that, so far as physical possibilities go, practically everything that was done could have been done by some of the sitters. It was absolutely clear that everything could *not* have been done by a single sitter. It was my best judgment that everything could *not* have been done with a single hand on each side of the table. But if a single hand is free on either side, a second hand is also free on that side—the hand which should be holding the one that we have just freed. Its owner would better be, and would probably be, an active accomplice. With two people on either side, each having one hand free, even though one of the free hands on either side be a left one, I think the question of sufficiency to produce the phenomena would not arise, save as I bring it up below.

The most serious obstacle to the hypothesis that four members of the circle were engaging in fraud comes with the consideration of motive. If there is fraud to this extent, we must ask whether the victims are the other sitters, or whether all the regulars are in the conspiracy, which would then be directed against the outsiders. Either hypothesis involves difficulties.

Nobody, apparently, pays any money in connection with these sittings. Certainly neither Sir Arthur nor I paid anything in connection

with this one, and it was the only psychic show I saw anywhere in Europe at which I was not assessed a guinea, or more. No effort is made to gain public recognition of the circle and its results—indeed, this recognition is actually shunned, and with such success that many British spiritists will fail to identify the group from what I have said about it. Again, in the absence of a medium we cannot maintain that fraud is indulged in to give any member of the group the sensation of being a big frog in a little puddle—there isn't any big frog.

This leaves the motive for fraud resting on one leg—the pleasure that a person, or several persons, of a certain type of mind would get out of imposing upon other people. That such a type of mind exists is not to be denied. But it goes a long, long way past what I should regard as the limits of profitable indoor sport to imagine that this circle has sat once a week for seven years to give half of it the pleasure of hoodwinking the other half. The suggestion has been made that each sitter, while supposing the bulk of the phenomena to be genuine, might chip in with his own manual contribution in aid of the "spirits," and that the entire seance might be merely the sum total of such contributions—each sitter accepting as genuine everything in which he had not actually had a hand. Psychologically, this rather appeals to me; but it overlooks the joined hands. I am sure that if, in a seance produced according to this theory, a sec-

ond member was necessarily aware of each sitter's guilty participation, the whole plot would come out.

The nearest thing to a motive that will really hold water, I should think, would come out of the charge that the entire circle is fraudulent, and held together by the fun of imposing upon the outsiders. But it is established to my own satisfaction that the presence of an outsider is a rarity. Still, I do not know this for a fact—I only believe it on the basis of what I have been told. And I suppose the statement would be valid that when they do catch a fish, they catch a big one. But I really think that eleven people who will practice to this extent once a week for seven years, just for the fun of fooling the occasional outsider in this way, would constitute a pathological phenomenon. The physical probabilities of fraud loom obviously large at this seance; but the moral ones and the psychological ones do not at all impress me.

The rearrangement of the sitters was of course bad, and was made worse by the fact that it came on top of a very considerable degree of pre-determination of the order of sitting. In a majority of my British seances a shift of this sort was called for, on the ground that it would make the psychic currents run better. I think it fair to call this a very suspicious coincidence.

Of the specific phenomena, the sleighbells were by all means the weakest. By no conceivable means could one know or even guess where

all the feet were when they rang. Moreover, their action was always accompanied by a distinct thud, and a jar to the table, as though a very material foot were delivering a very material jab upon the leather thong that carried the bells. Of course, the spiritists insist that the psychic operators take a fiendish delight in imitating material effects, in such style as to throw discredit upon their own work. But if this sort of argument is carried to its logical conclusion, it may as well be admitted that the phenomena are of such sort that any effort whatever to check them up is automatically defeated; and if this is the case, I do not see why anybody should accept them as genuine. How close the spiritists come to this absurdity, I think they do not realize. The bald fact regarding those bells was, that to my ears they did not ring true. Their ringing in the light, before any of the controls or psychic operators was supposed to be present, constituted a grave violation of seance etiquette, and likewise of the pseudo-scientific series of principles and explanations which the spiritists themselves have built up.

The most impressive feature of the seance, on the other hand, was the behavior of the lighted lamp. If the suggestion made by a correspondent were tenable, that this lamp in spite of its blanketing gave forth enough illumination to enable its operator to dodge obstructions, the explanation of its movement on "rationalist" grounds would not be nearly so difficult. But

this was the first question that came into my mind when the lamp began its stunts, and I gave it my most careful attention. I was never at any time able to see any object or person whatever in the light of this lamp. Moreover, its motion covered altogether too much ground to support the belief that the lamp was carried in the hand of a single sitter. There was no irregularity in the motion and no sudden eclipsing of the light to justify the belief that the lamp was passed or tossed from hand to hand. It had no wires or other connections at the end of which it might have been slung, and so far as I could see no place for the attachment of ropes or long, rigid handles. More conclusive comment is withheld for the final chapter.

The variability of observation experienced as between Sir Arthur and myself, in connection with Iris' fingers, is a common incident of seances—and for that matter, of courtrooms in which two witnesses attempt to describe in detail the same incident. It presents an interesting study in psychology, and a problem with which judges and juries must wrestle; but its bearing upon the incident over which the disagreement occurs is easily exaggerated. I make this observation, however, on general grounds, with no idea of receding from the suggestion which I have put down, above, with regard to this specific disagreement.

Some of the phenomena seemed to require, for their fraudulent production, either that prac-

tically all the group were confederates, or that the cheater were actually on the table. The passing around of the slate and the bell were such items; they came too close to the sitters at my end, and then at Sir Arthur's end, to make it seem at all plausible that they were manipulated by any single sitter or any small number of sitters, from their seats. I am very positive that nobody got up and resumed his seat sufficiently to make this hypothesis available for the explanation of these and other phenomena of wide range. The chairs and the floor were certainly such as to reveal any extensive indulgence in this sort of fraud. If there were fraud necessitating the movement of anybody from one place, the trickster entered the room from without, and was not one of the circle. I should be less inclined to deny this possibility in the present instance than in connection with the British College seances.

If all the wild noises were produced fraudulently, there would have been necessary a great deal of manual activity upon the part of two or three sitters, but no further difficulty. Two or three free hands, and there is no physical reason why all the racket could not have been effected in this manner.

The climax act with the circular plate has made this group famous among the leaders of British spiritism, and is frequently cited as one phenomenon that occurs in good light, under conditions making fraud impossible. While it

was under way, I had not examined plate, bag, or table—that came later, after the conclusion of the seance. I had therefore no idea, while the plate was in action, what evidence would be presented that its behavior was supernormal. Hence I devoted my attention, for the time, to watching the entire circle as closely as possible, for suspicious actions or suspicious attitudes; and I found what might have been regarded as such, on the part of one of the ladies.

This sitter was either in Sir Arthur's original seat, or in the one at its right—I was not sure which seat had been his at the beginning. Throughout the time when the plate was in action, she sat in a curious sideways position, as though trying to extend her foot further out under the table than her reach would comfortably permit. At the same time her body was bent slightly forward, while her head and eyes behaved as though she were trying to peer surreptitiously under the table. I was entirely satisfied that she was either implicated in the motion of the plate, or trying to see for herself what was going on beneath the table. Either hypothesis would have met her position and actions; between the two I was unable to choose.

When I finally examined the layout under the table, it seemed clear that the lady, unaided, could not have produced the observed results. That the bag was really tight I am confident. There would remain the possibility of a mechanical connection between the plate and the

table. The plate offered keen resistance to being replaced, while so far out of its seat as to make this seem improbable. If I were to attend a second sitting, I should watch the plate with particular care, to see whether or not the little pin actually left its hole, and if it did, how the plate behaved while it was out. At the time, I did not know of the pin, and after I had been shown it, I did not recall having noticed it during the levitation of the plate. If it does not leave its hole, there would be good possibility that the table-top contains a mechanical movement designed to press hard against the end of this peg, when operated by one of the sitters. If a compound leverage were thus brought to bear against the end of the peg, the effect, in the presence of the bevelled edge of the plate itself, would apparently be to thrust the plate out of its hole, substantially as observed. On the basis of what I can and cannot say, this appears the most likely means of fraudulent production of what I saw.

The bag could hardly have been air-tight; and in any event there was no escape of air when the plate was unseated. Hence the use of pneumatic power would seem out of the question.

Of course the simplest procedure would be for the plate to be displaced by direct human agency, working through the bag, from outside. It is to guard against this possibility that the bell is in the bottom of the bag. Its behavior would present three alternatives. First, the bag

might be shaken so hard that the bell would ring; but the bell didn't ring. Second, the bag might be so voluminous that its upper portions could be freely kicked and prodded, without sufficiently raising the folds at the bottom or sufficiently dragging them along the floor to ring the bell. This possibility I had in mind while examining the bag, and I concluded very definitely that there was not enough of it on the floor for such a result. Finally, one of the sitters might have anchored the lower part of the bag with his foot, while another operated upon the plate through the upper part. It is in connection with this procedure that the young lady of the suspicious attitude would enter the picture. But I was far from certain that even for this there was enough of the bag on the floor. The motion of the plate would have called for very violent kicking of the upper part of the bag, while the lady would hardly have been able to put much weight behind a stabilizing foot.

Beyond this brief analysis of the possibilities I should not care to go, on the basis of a single observation of the phenomenon. I would urge, however, the impropriety of bringing forward any argument against it, on the basis of its inherent improbability. We put all this behind us when, by examining these phenomena, we admit that perhaps they occur—that they are not necessarily all buncombe. After this admission, their occurrence is not a question of probability or improbability at all, but one of fact.

Citation of probabilities is now permissible only in the strict mathematical sense, as an attempt to measure the accuracy or completeness of our observations.

I shall deal more fully, in setting forth my general conclusions, with the propriety of recognizing that both fraudulent and genuine phenomena may occur in the same seance. For the moment, let us grant this. In the seance which I have just described, the psychological arguments against fraud are then rather strong, but of course are far from conclusive. If we pass these over, we find that the greater part of the sitting could have been done, with comparative ease and little danger of detection, through fraud on the part of a limited number of the sitters. There is no doubt in my mind that some at least of the phenomena were so produced. Where to draw the line and whether to draw it at all are questions of great difficulty. Pro or con, a dark seance with thirteen sitters is a mighty unsatisfactory basis for passing an opinion. It makes extremely difficult any argument as to the nature of the agencies at work, and almost insures that one will take away with one whatever opinions one brought in. Such sittings are of interest as a matter of education, to teach one just what sort of things are being done in the presence of mediums and being ascribed to spirit agents; but as a means of checking up the belief that this is their true source they are of very little value.

## CHAPTER X

### A BRILLIANT SESSION WITH EVAN POWELL

DURING the interval between the 5th. and the 12th. I was kept very busy, but rather in the direction of absorbing the general psychic atmosphere than with actual seances. On the second date mentioned, however, I had a sitting which went as far in the right direction as that of the 5th. had gone in the wrong. The medium was Mr. Powell. He had come up from his Welsh home, at very short notice, to give a Sunday seance at Sir Arthur's country place in Crowborough, principally for the benefit of an Episcopalian clergyman, whose interest had been aroused and who wished to look into the phenomena at first hand.

This seance was got up at so late a moment that I was out of the city for the week-end with one of the British correspondents of the *Scientific American*, and could not be located; so I missed it. The loss was not serious, since the performance ran largely to messages, and the physical side was mainly incidental. But of its sort, it had been a very remarkable sitting, resulting in much evidential material addressed to Sir Arthur and to the Reverend. The former was not perhaps so important, since there must by now be available, to one who cares to dig it up, a vast deal of material with reference

to Sir Arthur's past; but explanation of the things told the minister, a total stranger to the medium, was freely admitted by that gentleman to call for extraordinary hypotheses.

Sir Arthur and I went together to the British College, where the Monday seance was being given at the unusual hour of 4 P. M. We found the medium indulging in a nap in one of the private rooms. This led Sir Arthur to fear that Sunday's sitting had drained him, and that the coming seance might be detrimentally affected. On being awakened, the medium hastened to reassure us on this ground. The nap, he explained, was quite part of his usual procedure. He finds the process of nervous anticipation altogether the most trying part of the whole performance. It produces the most unpleasant sensations in what Sir Arthur and I inferred to be the solar plexus nerve center; and, finding it often possible to sleep through this disturbance, Mr. Powell has contracted the habit of thus avoiding the issue. He insisted that Sunday's session had taken nothing out of him; and the results indicated that he knew what he was talking about. Indeed, Sir Arthur, who has sat with him on scores of occasions, stated after the sitting that each of the phenomena that Mr. Powell gives, he had seen, isolated, to better advantage; but that he had never before witnessed such a satisfactory all-around demonstration of the entire repertoire as that with which we had just been favored.

I could quite understand that this must be so; the performance as a whole was a very impressive one—without a doubt the best of my entire trip.

We were told that sometimes Mr. Powell's control would tolerate a fair amount of illumination (of course, with red light); and we hoped that such might be the case at the present sitting. This turned out to be a false hope; darkness was demanded as soon as the sitting got under way, and was quite as absolute as usual. But for once, an attempt was made to give some degree of protection against the possibility of fraud.

This in fact, in darkness or in partial light, is a uniform feature of the Powell seances. The medium is not one of those sensitive, shrinking souls who are so easily thrown off their psychic stride by the suggestion that their phenomena are not necessarily to be taken without question at their face value. He points out to you, without waiting for you to suggest it, that if he cannot convince you that he is not doing the phenomena himself, the sitting is of no more scientific value than the circus, and of less interest. After the most extensive precautions have been put into effect that seem possible in the absence of actual scientific apparatus, he goes right ahead with his performance, unaffected in the least by any real or imagined atmosphere of hostility.

The medium's viewpoint is also that of the

control, another "red Indian," Black Hawk by name. Black Hawk is more concerned about the impression produced upon the sitters than about any other single feature of the seance, and he will not voluntarily permit any part of the program to be left behind without having assured himself, by repetition if necessary, that everybody has seen or heard, and been satisfied. He brings the words "fraud" and "collective hallucination" right out in public during the seance and even during the presentation of a phenomenon, and reminds the audience that unless all possibility of these is disposed of, the seance is of value only emotionally. It does not seem possible to insult either the control or the medium—which is far from the case at the average seance. I think it probable that one could go to lengths which would lead the other sitters to contemplate one's expulsion from the seance, without seriously disturbing Black Hawk. More than once he held up the sitting while he canvassed the audience with regard to the possibility that a given phenomenon had been the result of collective hallucination. The sarcastic manner in which he would articulate these two words after a particularly brilliant episode was very amusing. It has been inferred by some critics that this was part of a scheme of suggestion, to remove suspicion from our minds in the wake of phenomena that were actually attributable to this cause; but everything was so clean-cut that I cannot

accept this. I shall come back to this point in my final summary of impressions.

As I have indicated, Sir Arthur and I saw the medium before any of the other sitters; in fact, we woke him from his nap. In the chat which followed, it developed that Mr. Powell knew that he was to meet an investigator from America, whose judgment was regarded as possessing considerable importance if not much weight; and he was prepared to force me, if necessary, to take what he regarded as adequate precautions. I do not insist that these were in any sense absolutely preventive of fraud; but every reader, I think, will agree that they were such as to make fraud too difficult for any other than the most finished performer.

First of all he stripped to his underclothing, and insisted that I explore thoroughly the garments which he had removed, to assure myself that they contained absolutely nothing except a pocket handkerchief; and that I go over his person as he stood in drawers and shirt, assuring myself that these contained only himself. Then, donning his clothes again, he took me with him to the bathroom while he washed his hands in hot water, "to give assurance that no luminous substance" was thereon. I do not know whether this precaution would be an effective one. After the examination, he insisted that I stick to him like a leech until we got him safely in his chair in the seance room.

It is Mr. Powell's custom to sit securely tied

in his chair—or perhaps it would be more cautious to say, to all appearances so tied. He will tell you that he has got so accustomed to this mode of sitting that he is more at ease so, and produces more and better results when tied than when free. Sir Arthur, at a sitting in his own home, once protested against tying Powell, on the ground that he trusted him. The medium rejoined that he had himself tied for his own protection—"how do I know what I might do while in trance" being the idea behind this statement.

For the business of tying him, which was the first order of the day once the group was assembled in the seance room, a single long rope was provided. Another clergyman—not the one of Sunday's sitting at Crowborough—was among the sitters; and it was insisted that the minister and I do the tying, with no aid from the more regular sitters. The hypothesis that this was to direct our attention from something going on elsewhere in the room constitutes one phase of the confederacy theory, and is as admissible as this—no more and no less. It certainly was not to distract us from anything that the medium himself was doing, for it put him right in our hands.

The same room was used as for the Sloan sittings. The chair which the medium was to occupy was backed up hard against one of the cabinet pillars. The center of the rope was looped and knotted about the pillar, close to

the floor; and of the two equally long ends remaining, one was brought to each side and passed about the leg and rung of the chair, and again knotted. The medium then took his seat, and the Reverend gentlemen at his left and I at his right proceeded to tie him in as well as we knew how.

Both ends of the rope were brought, each from its side, about the uprights of the chair-back and about the medium's chest, being knotted before and after this. Then my collaborator took his end and I took mine, and independently we attacked the business of putting what was left of the rope to best use on the medium's arms and legs.

My end, of which there were still several yards, I passed thrice about the medium's upper arm and the upper, diagonal portion of the chair arm, twisting and knotting the three turns together in such fashion as (I hoped) to prevent their being slipped one at a time, while the three together seemed to cover so much of his arm as to prevent his slipping out of the whole combination in one move. Then I placed his lower arm along the lower, horizontal segment of the chair arm, and in the same fashion took several turns about the chair member and the medium's wrist. The clergyman did substantially the same thing on his side. During this time the only suggestions we received from the medium consisted in his repeated urging that we draw the ropes tighter and ever tighter. As a con-

sequence of this, we finally got them much tighter than we should have dared make them if left to our independent judgment as to what might check his circulation too severely.

My rope was next passed down about the medium's ankle and the leg of the chair, back to his arm once more, then down again—each time being well knotted; and finally it was secured to the horizontal braces beneath the chair, at the point where the lateral and longitudinal ones met, so that it would not slide along either brace. The minister and I met at this point, with just enough ends left to be nicely knotted together. Wax and a candle were then produced, and a large seal placed upon this knot.

On general principles, one is admittedly suspicious of a tie made by passing a single length of rope many times about the same object, or even about different objects. There is always the feeling that if the knots are not a thoroughly expert job, slack can be made in several different loops, and transferred around from loop to loop, *through* the knots, until all the slack is on one loop. If this can be done, the loop in question can probably be made slack enough to be slipped out of; whereupon it becomes, in its entirety, slack to be transferred to another loop. It is perfectly plain that if this attack succeeds in the initial stage outlined, it will necessarily succeed to the point of complete freedom. And I must confess that I have no confidence in my own ability, or that of any-

body else who is not a master of trick ties, to make a knot through which, once a little bit loosened, the rope may not be slipped longitudinally, transferring the knot to a different point on the ropes without altering its character.

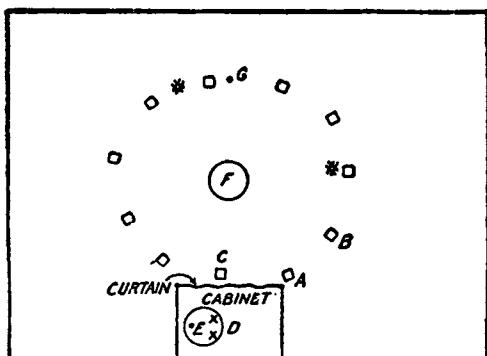
We guarded against this possibility to the extent of our amateur ability by making the knots include as many different turns of the rope as was in each instance possible. It did not seem to me possible for these knots to be jock-eyed sufficiently to carry out the program outlined above. Moreover, when the job was completed, it was one plainly done by unskilled hands. On this very account, it would have been extremely difficult either to untie the rope and tie it up again, or to slip out of it and slip back, leaving it in the same condition as originally. And so far as I could judge, the ropes at the end of the seance were, with due allowance for the inevitable minor slippage, in the same condition as at the beginning. If the medium does escape from the ropes, he is a highly skilled rope trickster; but if he is this, I should think it would be just about as reasonable to expect him to duplicate the amateurish ties of the Reverend and myself, as to expect a journeyman carpenter to duplicate the house which I, a miserable mechanic, might build.

As a matter of fact, the problem of escape was still further complicated. Everybody knows that, if a knot be tied tightly in ordinary sewing thread, the fineness of the thread

prevents its being untied in most cases; it has usually to be cut or broken, or if actually untied, this is done with the utmost difficulty. So, as a final step in tying up the medium, a spool of thread was produced, and his thumbs tied together as they sat, motionless in the rope tie, on his either knee. The thread was passed about the base of each thumb, so tightly as almost to cut the skin, and on each thumb was tied by means of a knot drawn as tight as possible; leaving eleven inches of the thread extending across his lap from thumb to thumb, quite taut.

Now it is perfectly clear that so long as this cotton thread remains intact and in place, the medium cannot possibly escape from the rope; and as long as the rope remains intact, he cannot possibly escape from the thread. He could break the thread, winding some of it about a thumb first if it were too slack to be broken otherwise; or he could cut the thread, near either thumb, by hacking at it with the finger nails of that hand. These are apparently the only ways in which he could conceivably make the first step toward freedom. If at the end of the seance the thread is found intact, the investigator has something to explain that is going to tax his ingenuity to the breaking point. If it is found broken, the very direct suspicion lies that the medium has been, at least partly, free from the thread and the ropes. To this point we shall return below.

With the medium secured in his chair as described, the circle was formed, the medium's fixed position fixing that of the circle to some extent, since he was included in the circle as at the Sloan sittings. I was seated at Mr. Powell's right, and the clergyman at his left, which was very satisfactory, as the clergyman



A: The medium. B: Mr. Bird. C: The clergyman. D, F: The table, at the beginning and end of the seance, respectively. E, G: The vase of flowers, originally on the table in the cabinet, at the end on the floor at the other side of the room. The single crosses indicate that the two clusters of bells were originally on the table; the double crosses mark the places where they were found at the end.

The sitting of March 12th with Evan Powell

was the one person who was known to me, on a substantial basis of established fact, to be an outsider like myself. It was in fact his first seance. We were instructed to join hands all around the circle, save that the Reverend and

myself were not to take the medium's hands. The skeptic will wonder whether there can be any reason for omitting the medium from the psychic circuit of hands, save the desire to conceal his success in escaping from his bonds. The seating seemed to be quite casual, and for once, no change of place was called for after we had got settled.

The medium cautioned us not, under any circumstances, to leap up, cry out, or break the circle of hands; and he warned us emphatically against sitting with crossed legs. This request is always made by a fraudulent medium, because it is far easier to locate all the feet and legs when he knows that the feet are to be found by merely exploring along the floor, and that he can move freely about in the space above the floor and in front of the sitters without encountering any wandering extremities. It is made, by many mediums in whose behalf a large presumption of genuineness exists, on the stated ground that crossed legs interfere with the psychic circuit. The oblique explanation was rather discounted in Mr. Powell's case when he told us that if at any time we thought we heard or felt him moving about in the central space, we might lash out and kick about with our feet to our hearts' content, just so we did not leave the chair or sit with legs crossed.

When the medium had resumed his clothes after my search of his person and garments, he had put on a pair of big felt slippers in place

of his shoes. The reason for these now appeared. He had me place my left foot upon his right, and *vice versa* in the case of the clergyman. The trick shoes made it a simple matter to be sure that it was his foot that one had, rather than that of another sitter. In spite of the cramping effect of keeping my foot inclined at an unnatural angle and in an unnatural place with reference to my chair. I was better satisfied by this test than by any other one attempted at this seance.

Mr. Powell is a cabinet medium. He does not sit in the cabinet, but the curtains are drawn and, if we may without further apology adopt the terminology of the true believers on this point, the cabinet space serves as an enclosure within which the psychic forces are worked up to the necessary pitch and from which they issue to produce the phenomena of the seance. That this is not necessarily farcical is I think made apparent by an analogy for which I am indebted to Dr. Hereward Carrington. He points out that a less expenditure of energy is required to charge a small electric conductor to a given voltage than similarly to charge a large one. So it may be valid, if there is a psychic force which may be dealt with by analogy with electricity, to say that the medium will expend less energy in charging a small, closed-off section of the room with this force, than in charging the entire room; and that if the cabinet really does serve a useful purpose other than

as an aid to fraud, it is doubtless in some such way as indicated by this analogy.

The cabinet, then, was in use. The curtains at front and sides were drawn; and inside the cabinet there stood a circular-topped table, perhaps two feet in diameter, with four legs. On this table were two clusters of sleighbells, a trumpet, and a vase of cut flowers in water. By virtue of the lop-sided effect given the circle through tying the medium to one post of the cabinet, the minister was almost squarely in front of the line of junction of the curtains. He was cautioned not to be alarmed when they opened and blew cold winds across him, or when objects were dragged out from the cabinet and past his interfering presence.

The lights went out, leaving us with the single red bulb, and the medium went quickly and quietly into trance to the singing of hymns without music. Black Hawk, the control, manifested himself in surprisingly short time, and thereafter dictated the choice of hymns and the time for singing them. Unlike the usual procedure of the Sloan sittings, songs were called for at intervals throughout the evening. Black Hawk's voice at first was thin and piping, but soon became deep enough for a normal male voice; and for the balance of the evening it displayed no other peculiarity than an undefinable effect of unfamiliarity with the English language. His command of a vocabulary was much better than White Feather's, and his pronunciation also;

but there was the very definite characteristic which I mention, and which eluded me in the search for its further elements.

Black Hawk insisted upon being formally introduced to all hands; he remembered when he had last sat with each, and usually the position on the circle at that sitting. Sir Arthur he singled out from the others as "Big Chief"—whether on physical or spiritual grounds was not indicated. The one would be as appropriate as the other, as those who have seen his huge bulk on the lecture platform will testify! A foreign sitter with a difficult name the control provided with a nickname, and a lady with whom he had previous acquaintance had already been thus favored. When he got to me, he knew me as from across the water (as did the medium); and he made a little talk to the effect that I had come from, and would presumably return to, his own country.

The introductions accomplished (obviously by simply naming the sitters in order, without carrying the medium around the circle), Black Hawk asked for darkness and got it—the same old total darkness which was now rather familiar to me. A little vocal work was done here and there throughout the seance, but only two communications demand special mention. A recently deceased parishioner came in, gave his name, and asked the Reverend to do something about sending a letter to the decedent's son in Liverpool. The Reverend stated that the de-

tails were all relevant and evidential, and promised to do as asked. If we incline to explain this through telepathy, we must in all fairness admit that it carries the telepathic hypothesis further than some critics are willing to follow it. We must remember here that the Reverend was a total stranger to the medium, and present in the same critical capacity as myself.

Later in the evening a person calling himself Wallie spoke loudly in my ear, so that all the sitters heard him clearly. He addressed me with great confidence, and was highly scandalized when I did not claim him at once. "My God, man, you don't mean to say that you don't remember me!" To my best judgment, nobody of the name whom I ever knew is dead; and I certainly never knew a Wallie with the degree of intimacy implied in this reproof. Indeed, I believe that in all my life I have known but one man whom I addressed by this name; and the visitor ruled out the supposition that he was this person by adding that he was "Wallie, from the office of the paper." This was significant in view of the fact that the medium surely did not know me as having journalistic connections; but it only made my repudiation of Wallie more certain, for I have most emphatically known no one of that name since I gave up teaching in favor of my present profession.

Wallie went away in a huff. I was mildly amused to hear several of the other sitters tell me that I should not have been so abrupt with

him, that I should have pretended to know him for the sake of encouraging him, etc., etc. When one introduces the least bit of dissimulation into a seance in the effort to catch the medium in a fault, one is warned peremptorily that that sort of thing exposes the medium to the possibility of being controlled by evil spirits instead of the customary good ones, and that it simply mustn't be done.

A few other attempts at communication were of no interest; the seance as a whole was of a distinctly physical character. Whether we believe it to have been genuine or fraudulent, we can doubtless agree that this was in recognition of my presence and interests.

The first manifestation came from the sleigh-bells. The table was at one side of the medium and behind him, in the cabinet; after experiment I decided that the probabilities were against his being able to reach them without disturbing the minister, even if he were free. First they rang at their stand in the cabinet. Then they came out and rang freely all over the room, now here, now there, in the interim between jingles caressing the faces of the sitters. They journeyed completely about the circle, passed in and out of it at will, went behind it to various distances and at various points, and ranged from floor to ceiling. Particularly in the height to which they travelled they seemed to go beyond the possibility of unaided manual manipulation, even if the me-

dium were free. On one occasion when they rang loud and long from a point high up over the center of the circle, the control referred with particular scorn to the "collective hallucination" hypothesis. He insisted that all the sitters assure him, individually and collectively, that he had outlawed this theory; and here he paid particular attention to my verdict.

The control directed the activities of the bells, and later of the various other apparatus, by talking softly and persuasively to the identities who were presumed to be doing the actual work. Whether to one of these identities or to all of them collectively I could not tell, he had a curious habit of addressing the term "Sweetheart." It was "Sweetheart, do this" and "Sweetheart, do that" throughout the seance. Many times, when the execution of his orders did not satisfy him, he sent Sweetheart back into the cabinet to work up more power.

For some time only one set of the bells was in operation. Ultimately the second set came into action; and on several occasions the two sets rang simultaneously from widely separated quarters of the room. The control was very proud of this "double phenomenon," and called our attention to it under that title whenever it occurred. It may therefore be in order to state explicitly that he did not tell us he was going to do it, and cajole us into believing that he had; in each case he did it first, and only then called our attention to it. Of course this

performance would not be outside the compass of elaborate apparatus, but it would call for more in this direction than I could easily picture as having got past my search.

After a while the bells got mixed up with the other phenomena, and became less prominent, finally ceasing entirely. One set was left on the floor at the far side of the circle from the medium, and the other deposited in the lap of my immediate neighbor. In these positions they were found at the end of the sitting, thus driving another spike into the despised collective-hallucination theory.

Next on the program came the flowers. These were withdrawn from the vase and passed around the circle. I was first to feel them, and I must say they gave me a bit of a jump. The wet stem-ends were trailed across the side of my face, feeling for all the world like a set of cold, clammy, damp fingers. While I was trying to decide just what *had* touched me, they were presented to somebody else, blossom ends to, and thus identified. They went the whole round of the circle, caressing hands and faces, usually lingering over these caresses, and in some instances being specifically presented to the nose of a sitter to be smelled. Then the bouquet was broken up and individual blossoms bestowed upon several of the ladies, in whose possession they were found at the end of the sitting.

Immediately after the flowers, the vase with

water in it passed completely about the circle, from the medium's left around to me at his right, each sitter in turn being gently sprayed with the water. Apparently I was overlooked, and when the control's attention was called to this by a question addressed to me by another sitter, he expressed surprise that I had not been "baptized," and the oversight was at once made good. The vase was found, at the end of the sitting, on the floor between two chairs.

With the medium directly in front of the right-hand pillar, the Reverend, though placed as far from him as the necessity for foot control permitted, could not be got really clear of the entrance to the cabinet. From time to time during the production of the above phenomena, the Reverend stated that the curtain in front of the cabinet was billowing out over him; and on one occasion the right-hand side of it billowed out over me, and even slightly over my neighbor. Whenever this happened, the Reverend had the very distinct impression that somebody or something was passing him, en route to or from the cabinet. On two of these occasions I felt unmistakably the classic "cool breeze" from the direction of the cabinet. Finally the Reverend announced greater activity and wider separation of the curtains than at any previous moment—and out came the table! It came high, clearing the shoulders of the medium and the clergyman, as nearly as I could gather from the latter's rather agitated account of what was

going on. It then gyrated back and forth and up and down a bit. One leg was presented to the Reverend's knee rather persistently, and he got the idea that the table was lost, and trying to grope its way back to the cabinet. The control corrected this, explaining that they were merely trying to give him a demonstration that the table was really out and moving. This he conceded with great enthusiasm, whereupon the table came down in the center of the circle, with a bang.

The Reverend still has a suspicion that something had been fumbled, and wanted to know whether the table could be put back in the cabinet—apparently he thought that the guides could not locate the cabinet. One of the ladies expressed dissent; she thought she would much prefer to have the table stay where it was until the lights went up, to prove that it had really moved. Black Hawk, again referring to the theory of collective hallucination, thought this the better practice, but put the matter to a vote. The Reverend found himself in a minority of one, and the table remained out, being found, with the coming of the lights, right out in the center where it was supposed to be.

By repeated experiment, I satisfied myself that, if the medium were entirely free, he would have found it difficult, if not actually impossible, to reach the table and grasp it with sufficient effect to move it as it was moved, without withdrawing his feet from control.

Some action was got out of the trumpet, which came out of the cabinet and caressed me on the side of my face away from the medium, and then touched several other sitters. Its most surprising manifestation came in connection with the singing, however. Without any warning whatever, while we were singing one of Black Hawk's favorites, my neighbor and I discovered a deep bass trumpet voice between us, doing more than its fair share of the work. Presently it shifted to a point between Sir Arthur's sister-in-law and her neighbor, and while there was alternately alto and soprano. It was heard on the other side of the circle as a true tenor. Then it took up an extended stand between me and my neighbor again, and for a long time sang bass and alto on alternate notes. The control referred to this as a double phenomenon but strictly speaking, as described, it was not that.

While this trumpet singing was going on, the extraneous voice could usually be heard by all the sitters, though occasionally by some only. When we sang more softly, with intent, it was invariably heard by all. When the voice shifted from one location to a new one, the most extraordinary rapidity of motion on the part of the trumpet was implied.

On several occasions I was patted, slapped, slammed or pounded upon wrist, arm, shoulder or back by a "materialized hand." It was certainly a hand, and a right husky one in the bargain. At no time did this strike at a point which

the medium could not have reached with his right arm free; at no time did it strike anyone but me. Yet at no time did it foul the back of my chair, at the point where it rose between the medium and me, though more than once it pounded me so emphatically, on the left shoulder blade nearest the medium, that my neighbor at my right felt the impact through her hand clasping mine and resting on my right knee.

Toward the end, all else was abandoned in the effort to produce psychic lights. The control's "sweethearts" were several times sent back into the cabinet in disgrace, to work up more power. Finally the lights began to come, and after some difficulty were brought to a point of marked satisfaction. For a while they were so faint as to be visible only to the person to whom directly presented and to his immediate neighbor on either side. Ultimately they got strong enough for everybody to see the same light. Those presented to me advanced toward me until within a few inches of my face, and then withdrew. Their progress usually gave the illusion of floating, and was therefore, apparently, rather slow. The ones presented to me were apparently balls: those passing across the circle as a whole were less well defined, and could hardly be more explicitly described than as luminous patches. As in the Sloan seances, they seemed to possess no illuminating power, but to be merely self-luminous. A very good range of movement was shown by the later ones, some of which entered

the circle from without, at the medium's left and presumably from the cabinet, and passed completely across and out; while others started within the circle, near the floor, and went upward practically to the ceiling, which is high.

Sir Arthur and several of the others stated that they had occasionally, at other sittings, been touched by the lights. When this happens the impression is that of something sticking to the face, rather after the fashion of an object clinging to the beard or of, say, a thistle clinging to a beardless face, and not giving the impression of actual gluey adhesiveness.

Finally Black Hawk bade us good night, and there ensued the one profoundly unsatisfactory incident of the entire seance. This had to do with the thread joining the medium's thumbs. Somebody, at the beginning, had jocularly asked Mr. Powell what he would do if we found it broken, and he indicated that he would feel mightily sold. Accordingly it was arranged that I should inspect the thread at the end, breaking it myself after this.

*A priori*, this thread test presents three possibilities. The thread might remain unbroken throughout the seance; it might be broken and replaced; or it might become and remain broken. The second alternative, with its direct implication of fraud, would be subject to further classification, according to the exact degree of freedom attained by the medium. Against this alternative is, first, the fact that the ropes were

tied with the design of making the medium's freedom impossible. But though I am by no means confident that this design was not effectively carried into execution, it seems to me that a far more serious barrier lies in the restoration of the thread. It would have been easy to conceal fresh thread where my search would not have found it; and since there was no search after the sitting, it would have been easy to dispose of the old thread. But the difficulties of getting the medium back into the rope and the thread at the same time would be, it seems to me, sufficient to bar this hypothesis entirely, and reduce us to a choice between the first and third alternatives which I have stated.

If the thread were broken and not replaced, the medium would be under the necessity of admitting this, or of concealing it. He could admit it by claiming accidental breakage—a claim which might or might not meet the facts. He could conceal it only by some trick designed to make the audience believe that the thread had been tested, and found intact. And this leads us right to the unsatisfactory incident forecast above.

Black Hawk had said good-night, and had supposedly gone. One of the ladies was on her way to the wall to turn on the red light, when his voice was heard again, ordering her to wait. He then addressed me, asking me to locate the medium's right thumb. Having done this, I was instructed to pull on the thumb, and assure my-

self that the thread was intact. I followed instructions, and for a moment had no doubt that the desired assurance was mine. Then I was told to pull harder (on the thumb still, not on the thread) and break the thread.

Now one cannot think of everything at a moment when one's whole attention is concentrated upon storing up a sufficient recollection of what is going on, to form the basis for a story as detailed as the present one. If this was really a trap, I offer no apologies for having fallen into it. I think that if the suggestion had not been planted in my mind, by the preliminary pull and by my own admission, that the thread was intact, I should probably have realized the gross unwisdom of the last request and refused to comply. As things lay, I realized it just an instant too late—after I had pulled on the thumb and "broken" the thread.

My pull was momentarily resisted, then the thread came away. For the instant I had no doubt that I had really broken it, as per schedule. Immediately, however, while I was in the act of stating to the group that I had broken the thread, it dawned upon me that I had heard no clean-cut snap, and that the sensation which I had felt had been entirely too soft. It would in fact have been distinctly applicable to the pulling, out of the grasp of the medium's thumb and finger, of the previously severed end of the thread. When light was available for examination, the thread was found broken about an inch

from the knot at the base of the medium's left thumb—the one remote from me. Whether broken by him or by me, it would as likely have parted here as anywhere else.

I have revolved this incident in my mind more than any other single episode of my entire stay abroad. I want to be fair to the medium; and I must at the same time be fair to the facts. My best judgment is that the thread was probably broken in advance, and that the trick which I have outlined was probably performed. The strongest argument in this direction is not found in discussion of the probability that my sense impressions at the time were right or wrong, but lies rather in the very nature of the test employed to enable me to determine whether the thread was intact. The natural way to do this would have been to examine the thread in the light; and we were on the point of getting light to examine it in. The procedure actually adopted was highly artificial, elaborate, indirect. It does not seem to me that it would ever occur to one, much less be employed by one, who did not have something to conceal.

On the other hand, let us suppose for the moment that the phenomena were genuine. What, in this event, is the purpose of the tying and the other tests? Obviously these tests have now no bearing at all upon the genuineness of the phenomena, but are merely for the purpose of making it easier to demonstrate and to accept that genuineness. If the medium really did not do

the manifestations himself, it is immaterial whether he were free or not. If they were genuine, they were just as genuine with the medium untied as with the medium tied. In this event, failure to convince us that he was properly tied becomes a very minor issue.

This concession can be made only in the presence of evidence of genuineness, independent of the tying. Evidence, I said—not proof; we haven't got our psychic research to that point yet, by a wide margin. To some extent the range of the phenomena, which has led me to observe more than once that I was uncertain that even if the medium were free he could do them, is such evidence. The foot control is to a larger extent such evidence. Expert examination of the premises, or complete assurance that a comparable performance had been given on premises to which no one could possibly have had access in advance on the medium's behalf, would make the "double phenomena," demanding elaborate apparatus for their fraudulent production, very evidential indeed in this direction. I am by no means prepared to condemn the seance because of the mere failure to carry out effectively, and in a manner free from suspicion, one of the important tests.

At the same time I am not prepared to waive that failure. It constitutes a significant fact and as such I record it. If the thread were broken at any time during the sitting, it would have been possible for the control to announce this

at once and have me verify it. That this was not done suggests that the medium was sufficiently free from his bonds to make it inexpedient to have me fumble about with him. Or, if one prefers, I suppose it suggests that the thread was not broken at all, and that my impressions on "breaking" it myself were wrong. There is much to say on both sides. But when the arguments are all in, there remain the significant facts that the thread was supposed to remain intact; that importance was attached to its remaining intact; that questionable means were employed of enabling me to examine its condition; and that as a result I am unable to assert that it remained intact. This is the mildest construction that can be given the incident. It does not damn the seance, or its results. It does render the seance less convincing than it would have been if the thread test had been carried out in a proper way to a successful issue.

I fear that I must now be guilty of anti-climax; the last sentence above suggests the end, and I am not quite through. Black Hawk really went away now, and the red light came on. We found it quite impossible to release the medium, however, until the full white light of the entire chandelier was available. This is perhaps as good evidence of any of the difficulties which would have confronted the medium under any theory of fraud. In the full light I examined his bonds, and so far as I could judge they had not been disturbed. Certainly the knot carrying

the seal had not been, hence if he had escaped at all it had been by slipping the ropes rather than untying them. His ability to slip back into the same loops in the same way would then take a lot of explaining; if he once got out of them, they ought to collapse into an inextricable mess.

It may be in order here to say, regarding the phenomena which could have been done by the medium's hands if these were free, that the believers have a theory under which these could have been free quite legitimately. They hold that the medium's arms, or for that matter any other portions of his anatomy, may be "demanterialized" by the psychic operators, and reassembled outside the bonds; the process, of course, being reversible when it is desired to restore the *status quo*. They believe that in many instances, the medium's arms and legs are actually made available for use in this way, and used in the production of the phenomena. Various instances are given which look toward the demonstration, or at least toward the illustration, of this. For instance, I am told that a young lady among the sitters (place and medium not specified) once complained of being chilly; whereupon she at once found herself enveloped in the medium's coat, though he had been securely tied up with this on him.

Curiously enough, after we got the medium free, he did not at once come out of his trance, but sat for ten minutes in full light, talking to Sir Arthur and others in the personality of the

same Peter Galloway who had appeared at the second Sloan sitting. Whether in that personality or in some other, he talked to the Reverend in what appeared to be Welsh, relapsing into English to say something about Bread and Cheese. The clergyman explained that in his part of the country there was a hill that bore this curious name, presumably as a corruption of an original Welsh designation. What this original was, nobody had ever been able to guess; and it was inferred that an attempt was being made to tell.

Mr. Galloway proved his Scotch by giving the regular password, "It's a braw bricht licht, the nicht"—it's a fine bright night. The statement was volunteered by several of the sitters that no Welshman speaking in his own identity could possibly meet this test. In view of the consonantal character of the Welsh tongue, this seemed to me a very reckless claim; the test sentence sounded to me as though any German could meet it, and I could certainly meet it myself.

I have done Mr. Powell an injustice if my text has not made clear what I said at the start: that this was by all odds the most extraordinary seance which I attended, and that much was done which I could not explain to my own satisfaction on any basis of fraud. And when I say this, I do not forget that I have advanced good ground for supposing that the medium was, in part at least, free from his bonds.

## CHAPTER XI

### A PHOTOGRAPHIC SEANCE WITH WILLIAM HOPE AND MRS. BUXTON

DURING the late summer of 1922, a test seance was given by William Hope, the photographic medium, before officers of the British Society for Psychical Research. A package of plates was brought in, presumably in the original seals as obtained from the manufacturers; but by special and secret arrangement, the makers had marked these plates, either before wrapping, or with X-rays after wrapping. Several plates were exposed; one of them on development showed a psychic extra; and this plate failed to show the secret mark. The investigators claimed to have actually observed the act of substitution; Hope and his defenders agree that the result shows substitution to have been effected. But with this agreement ceases.

Hope's defenders have brought several different arguments to bear, but always they accuse the investigators, or somebody connected with them, of the substitution. The investigators, in attempting to clear themselves, have given a history of the package of plates, which shows that it was in their hands an unnecessarily long time, and that it was passed about from one custody to another in a very unsatisfactory fashion while they had it. Equally, neither side

made adequate attempts to protect the wrapper which had been removed from the package, so that when the claim was advanced, several months too late, that this showed marks of tampering, no defense could be made to this charge. The people, in England and America, who feel that psychic photography is not possible, are entirely satisfied that Hope has been shown up as a fraud. Those who accept psychic photography as within the possibilities are entirely satisfied that he has entered an adequate defense, and that the researchers have been convicted of sharp practice through too great anxiety to "expose" him at any cost. There the matter rests, and the circumstances are such that no arbitration is now possible.

This incident has really nothing to do with my story. But I set it forth here, simply to make it clear, to those who may have known of the charges against Hope and not of his defense, that he *has* entered a defense, and one that does not suffer greatly in comparison with the case for the prosecution. Were this not the fact, were he with any degree of certainty a convicted even if not a confessed fraud, I should still, I think, have sat with him when opportunity offered, merely to see whether I too could catch him. As things stood, it did not seem necessary to apologize to myself even to this extent for sitting with him; it would be unfair to regard him as under any more suspicion than any other physical medium. So when an engagement was

made for me to sit with him at the British College on Tuesday, March 13th., the eve of my departure for my Continental jaunt, I arranged to go, as a matter of course.

Hope, when he sits at the College, enjoys quarters specially reserved for him. This includes two small rooms on the top floor, one serving as the studio and one as the dark-room. The only entrance to the suite is through the studio. This room has one window, opening out of doors. It is furnished with a bare table, a few chairs, and the oldest, most disreputable camera in the world. As Mrs. McKenzie very pertinently says: "you mention the meagre furnishing of the studio. We purposely do this, for if we had other cameras about, or any appliances, we should immediately be suspect." The general effect upon me was well in line with the psychology of this remark; I looked about the room, and asked myself how in the world fraud could be committed here.

The camera, by the way, is Hope's property rather than that of the College. It was given him by Archdeacon Colley, years ago, and he always uses it. Quoting Mrs. McKenzie again, "he has another camera provided by a group of friends, but as some feel happier with a special pen or a favorite old smoking jacket, he likes his old camera." Whether he uses the same box at Crewe, and brings it to London with him, I do not know.

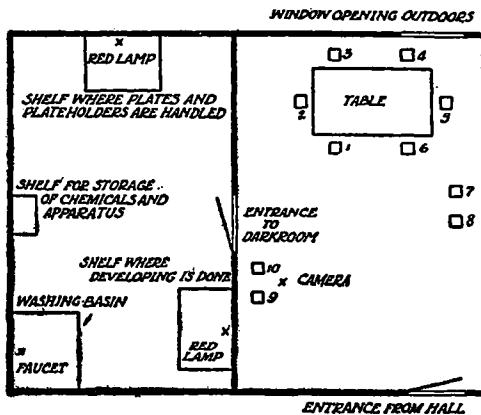
The dark room is even more startling in its

poverty than the studio. There is a single large washing basin, part of the plumbing; there are three developing trays, three jars of chemicals on a wooden shelf, one glass beaker, and three wooden plate-holders; and there is a red lamp on either side of the room. That is literally all. Sir Arthur's habit is to refer to this equipment and to Hope himself with the phrase that Hope is "unquestionably the worst professional or semi-professional photographer in the world." He is certainly the worst equipped, and I suspect that the plain adjective is not unmerited.

His recent imbroglio with the organized researchers has made Hope realize that test conditions of some sort are his only protection. Hence he sits, now, only with control substantially as found in my session with him. In particular, he insists that all plates used be brought in, in the original seals, by the sitter. I had been advised of this; and, on the morning of the seance, I purchased at the Westminster Photographic Exchange, in Victoria St., a package of a dozen rapid quarter-plates, the size used by Hope's camera. This store, I might say, was neither dictated nor suggested to me; I found it in the classified telephone book, and selected it as the nearest to my hotel of the supply stores there listed. After getting the plates, I dropped the package in my pocket, and carried it about with me until I reached the seance room. From the time it was selected until the time it was used

it was not out of my possession, save as detailed below; and never was it out of my sight.

There were to be present Sir Arthur and myself, and two friends of the Doyles, Sir X. Y. Z. and Lady Z. The two mediums—Hope and Mrs. Buxton; see the remarks covering this point on



The seats at the table, in numerical order, were occupied by Mr. Hope, Mrs. Buxton, Sir Arthur, Sir X. Y. Z., Mr. Bird and Lady X. Y. Z. During the actual photography, the places 7-10 were occupied, respectively, by Sir Arthur, Mr. Bird, Mr. Hope and Mrs. Buxton.

Arrangement of the rooms and the sitters at the photographic seance with William Hope

page 49—made six in the party in the studio. The four “sitters” taxied out to Holland Park together after luncheon in Sir X. Y. Z.’s apartment. Sir Arthur was very perturbed by the muggy weather. It appears that of all plates

exposed by Hope, about one in seven shows a psychic extra. One never knows whether one will draw a blank or not; and damp weather is supposed greatly to interfere with the exercise of any mediumistic powers.

The Z.'s were introduced to the mediums by name; so was I, without mention of my identity or even of my profession. Examination of the premises was first in order, with the general result noted above. I gave my detailed attention to the camera and the other tools of the photographer's profession that were to be used. I am not a professional photographer, but I believe I know what to look for in examining a camera for evidences of trickery. Both box and lens were gone over carefully, without result; but the reservation ought to be made that a pin hole in the bellows, capable of admitting enough light to affect the plate moderately, could perhaps not have been found with the eye. As far as any actual extraneous apparatus inside the box or on the lens is concerned, there wasn't any.

Hope uses no shutter, nor even a lens cap; he makes his exposures by covering and uncovering the camera with the black focussing cloth, after the removal of the dark slide. This struck me as rather curious technique, and I accordingly examined the cloth in question with even more care than I should ordinarily have employed. I found nothing suspicious.

The three plate-holders were handed me, and I was asked to select one. Having done so, I



The plate for which Mr. Bird sat with Sir Arthur, exposed apparently under identical conditions with that for which Mr. Bird sat alone, shows no trace of any extraneous image.

examined this holder with extreme care. It had been thoroughly marked by numerous previous sitters, so that substitution could not profitably have been attempted. Having been examined, it went into my pocket and stayed there until it was needed in the dark-room.

The door was now locked, and the six sitters drew up to the table. The package of plates, still with its original wrapper intact, was transferred from my pocket to the center of the table. The six of us joined hands about the table, and hymns were sung, without music, to the best of our miserable collective ability. Once or twice Hope or Mrs. Buxton interpolated a prayer. Presently Mrs. Buxton took the package between her hands; Hope added his hands outside hers; and the rest of us, one at a time, followed suit. The package remained above the table and in plain sight here, in its nest of hands. The pose was held for several minutes while Mrs. Buxton, apparently in silent prayer, "influenced" the plates. Nobody knows, least of all the mediums, if their claims be valid, in just what this process consists. The procedure is an empirical one, and the nearest one can come to rational explanation is some rather loose statements about harmonious currents and harmonious vibrations.

While the plates were having the spell placed upon them, it was explained again that we might draw a blank, and speculation was indulged in whether this would be the issue. At a word

from Hope, the preliminaries were ended; I regained, identified and pocketed the package of plates; and Hope and I adjourned to the dark room. During the "influencing" Mrs. Buxton gave a convulsive little shudder, like a man with a fly in his ear; this Sir Arthur announced, on the basis of previous experience, to be an almost certain sign that we should have results.

In the dark room, Hope did not once touch the plates. I was quite aware of the fact that if he did touch them, nothing that might be found on them would be of the slightest significance; therefore it may be taken for granted that whatever else I may have missed, I watched effectively for this. He stood at my shoulder, superintending my manipulation of the glasses and occasionally offering a suggestion; but he did not at any time, under cover of this, attempt to put his hands upon them.

I took the package from my pocket and broke the wrappings. Before I got past the outer one, Hope reminded me that the plates were in pairs, hinged together by a flap of the emulsion; and he suggested that I decide, now, which ones I should use. Whether this was suspicious I am not quite sure. It certainly made it impossible, thereafter, for him to force any particular plate upon me; it also, if he had means for exposing the plates to an extra image in the dark-room, enabled him to know what plates thus to expose, without waiting until I had actually got them in my hands en route to the holder.

I chose the bottom plate of the first pair, and the top plate of the second pair. When I had got the four topmost plates separated from their common inner wrapper, I broke the second away from the first and the third away from the fourth with considerable difficulty. In doing this I was rather inclined to think that I might have touched the emulsion side of one of them, with the ball of my thumb, but said nothing of this. As I got each of the desired plates free, I laid it on the table before me, emulsion side up, and traced my name on it with a blunt lead pencil. I then rewrapped the remaining ten plates and replaced them in my pocket, since it was necessary to keep them under control against the subsequent use of two more of them; and only when I had them thus out of sight and mind did I get the plateholder out of my other pocket. It was of a type unfamiliar to me, and Hope had to tell me what to do; but he scrupulously refrained from pointing or making any other false moves. There was a glass slide outside of each plate, and these I signed as I had signed the plates, to insure against substitution of the entire ensemble or of the slides alone. I finally got the plates, the glass slides and the dark slides in place, latched the holder, and restored it to my pocket. Then we returned to the studio, where the others awaited us.

Sir Arthur and I were to sit together for the first exposure, I alone for the second. Hope focussed the camera upon the two empty chairs,

and called me to verify the range and direction. He shifted the hood to the front of the camera; I placed the holder in its seat and removed the dark slide. Sir Arthur by this time was in his seat; I went to mine. Hope raised the hood, held it clear of the camera for about fifteen seconds, and dropped it back into place. During this time he and Mrs. Buxton stood at either side of the camera and slightly behind it, with hands joined above it, Hope's free hand holding the cloth, and Mrs. Buxton's free member resting lightly upon the box, in plain view.

The exposure terminated, I rose to replace the dark slide and remove the plate-holder. In writing up the sitting in the June issue of the *Scientific American*, I indicated that I replaced it, reversed, immediately. This was obviously an error; the camera would have to be focussed, first, upon the single chair which I was to occupy in the second exposure. My notes indicate that the camera was not disturbed, but that focussing was accomplished by moving the chair. My recollection would contradict this. The point is of some importance, since in the one case we can insist that the camera was in exactly the same condition for both exposures and in the other we cannot. In any event, I have a very distinct remembrance that focussing was accomplished while I stood beside the camera with the plate-holder assembly in my hand, in order to be sure that this should be properly reversed. I glanced through the instrument to verify the

focussing with Sir Arthur in my chair, and then replaced the plate-holder in its grooves. The exposure was made as before, and again I accompanied the medium into the dark-room.

If I were having a series of test sittings, I should insist that, part of the time at least, the medium stay out of the dark-room. His presence there, no matter how strongly one may insist upon his inaction, will always be attacked, and the very pertinent question proposed: "What was he doing there, anyhow; why couldn't he stay outside during loading and development?" In a single sitting like mine, this question is easily answered; he didn't stay outside because he was as much privileged to regard me with suspicion as I, him.

Hope got down his beaker and his two jars, and mixed his developer. He was ready with it before I was ready with the plates; to keep him busy I managed to knock it over with my elbow and he had to mix it afresh. The precaution was doubtless superfluous, but certainly harmless. When he was ready again, I had my plates out of the holder and waiting for him in the developing tray. The latter, by the way, I had scratched across with my thumb-nail quite thoroughly, so that it might at least be hoped that if there were the makings of an extraneous image on it, I should effect recognizable damage thereon. I poured the contents of the beaker in, and proceeded with the rocking of the plates. The images came out slowly; but in

a couple of minutes it became obvious that the plate with the single portrait on it, at least, was going to show some extras. In a moment or two more the other one was sufficiently developed to make sure that it would be normal.

Development completed, the negatives were placed in the fixing bath, and a report made to those in the studio. All waited in great tension until the fixing was complete; and were then disappointed to find that, as is usually the case, one could not say from the negative whether one recognized the extra or not. Prints would not be ready until next day, and I was obliged to leave for Paris that evening. It was arranged that prints should go to Sir Arthur, who would hand them to me on board the *Olympic*; and, as a very special concession on the part of the College, quite opposed to their ordinary routine and seldom if ever made before, it was agreed that I might have the negative too. I examined the negative very carefully before leaving it, and again on getting it back on the ocean. It had not been altered in any respect; the reproduction herewith shows its original state.

The prints have been carefully examined by all four sitters and both mediums, and the clear extra has not been recognized—it is not necessary to make this statement of the other mark, between the good extra and my own head, which might by a liberal exercise of the imagination be a human face but by no stretch an identifiable one. This result is not at all unusual; in

only a minority of cases is the "psychic extra" recognizable as pertaining to one of the sitters.

Sir X. Y. Z. and his Lady next sat twice, together each time, with Sir X. Y. Z. playing the rôle in the dark-room which I had played during my half of the sitting. They used plates from the second four of my package. They got no extras, nor any extraneous mark of any description whatever.

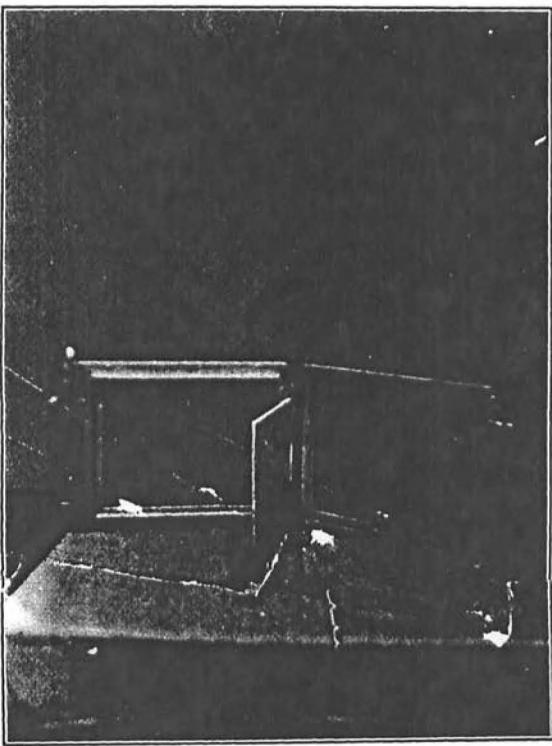
The photograph reproduced herewith is either the product of fraud, or a genuine psychic phenomenon—not necessarily spirit, but merely psychic, supernormal. One who takes it to be a fraud must make a plausible showing as to how it could have been produced, under the conditions described. Substitution of plates or pre-preparation of a plate absolutely will not do. Whatever else Hope may have put over on me, he certainly did not put that over.

Admittedly, photography is peculiarly susceptible to tricks which are difficult of discovery. There is no thought of presenting a complete catalog of these, but some of the types of fraud which might be attempted by a fake psychic photographer may well be considered in the present connection. A member of the faculty of the College of the City of New York, who sat some time ago with Hope, with a result similar to mine, puts forward one suggestion involving nothing more elaborate than ordinary sleight of hand. Working from the obvious fact that the extra image could be obtained by slipping a thin

celluloid transparency, showing the face clear on a slightly opaque ground, into the camera with the plate-holder and immediately in front of the latter, he catalogs the following suspicious circumstances:

Hope wore a coat considerably too large for him, with loose sleeves and large pockets. He used an old camera with very loosely fitting plate-holders. He used, not a lens-cap or a shutter, but the dark cloth, and this hung down in front of the camera in such a way as to hide it and part of Hope's body. He posed the subject against a plain background which was dull but not black. All this gave, in the case of the gentleman who puts forward the suggestion, ample opportunity for the clandestine insertion of such a transparency as is described above, and this gentleman has since then got an amateur conjurer to play the trick upon an intelligent audience with complete success. All his suspicious details were repeated at my sitting.

If such a transparency were used, the plate that was exposed through it would have to stay longer in the camera, or else would be much slower in developing. The exposures were not timed, but to my best judgment were of approximately equal duration. I am quite certain that both came out substantially with equal speed in the developer. I have a rather distinct recollection that the four hands of the two mediums were in plain sight throughout the exposure; whether one of them took a brief trip under the



Hope's plate-holder, of the hinged type, as used in the  
sitting of March 13th.

black cloth while I was seating myself would of course be much harder for me to say. If the transparency were in front of the plateholder, it could easily be of such size that there would be no danger of my bringing it out with the latter. It would have been used on my *second* exposure; and the mediums would have had opportunity to recover it, during the examination of my negative and before Sir X. Y. Z. sat.

Such a transparency represents only one of a large number of ways in which the plate could have been surreptitiously exposed to an extra of some sort. Perhaps the most dangerous possibility lies in the very curious type of plateholder used, and of which a photograph appears herewith. Not alone in its fashion of opening with a hinge does this depart from standard American practice, but the use of a glass screen over each plate is apparently quite superfluous and certainly very suspicious. There are no grooves sufficient to hold the plate in place after the removal of the dark slide; instead of being slipped in from one edge, the plate is laid in the open holder, the glass slide laid in over it, and the frame shut down upon the latter—or perhaps the glass slide is an integral part of the frame, I am not sure which. In any event, it is abundantly clear that an image could be stencilled upon the glass screen and thereby impressed upon the plate. Such an image might be actually radio-active, or it might be a chemical substance that would sufficiently affect the

passage of light to make an impression upon the plate, without being visible to the eye. In the latter event, the slide would presumably be treated as the transparency of the previous suggestion.

Another possibility which was in my mind at the time of the seance, and which has been put forward by several correspondents in response to my *Scientific American* article describing this sitting, is that a radio-active image was upon Mrs. Buxton's palm while she was influencing the plates in their package. At the time, I was under the impression that this was sufficiently guarded against by the fact that Sir X. Y. Z.'s two plates, from my package, showed no extra. But on giving more careful consideration to the matter, it appears that this is not quite the case.

Sir X. Y. Z. did not use my two plates, left over from the package of four at the top of my dozen. Had he done so, I should have been completely protected, since no radio-active or X-rayed image could have reached either of my plates without penetrating, and leaving an impression upon, one of his. But both of his were below both of mine in the package. If this trick were played, my plate that shows the extra must have been the second in the pile; and after the paper wrappings, the rays carrying the extraneous image would have had to penetrate only the glass and the film of the first plate to reach the film of this one. To reach the film of the next one, however, they would have to penetrate

the film of the second, and the glass of both second and third—one more film and two more glasses. (The first and second plates are packed with their film sides together, as are the third and fourth.) It seems barely possible, though not at all probable, that rays strong enough to go through one glass and make so marked an impression as my best extra, would be cut down by two further glasses below the point where they would make any visible impression at all. The glasses rather than the films are the critical element here, because whatever of opacity may have been present was in them and not in the films. Had I realized the absence of absolute proof here, at the time of the sitting, I should have developed the two idle plates. If they showed no extras it would be proved that the package, as such, was not tampered with.

I made an attempt to spoil any image which might have been stencilled upon the developing tray, but such an image might have been capable of resisting my scratches. But I am quite sure that the plates moved too much to make possible the one rather clean-cut face; and at the same time too little to justify the assumption that all the extras represent different exposures to the same image on the tray. The probabilities of successful fraud of this type I think are negligible.

Another suggestion places the ever-present radioactive image inside the dark slide. This correspondent writes: "I believe that a clever

workman could slit the dark slide of the plate-holder, paint on the inner side a face in radium paint (or insert a thin piece of paper, etc., carrying such a face), and fasten the slide together in such a fashion that detection would be impossible." Hope's dark slide was a thin sheet of metal, and I think would not have permitted this technique, but in any event, such an image on either slide should have affected both plates.

The suggestion that there was a pin-hole in the bellows, through which Hope exposed the plate to the extra image, I think need not be taken too seriously. This procedure would have called for a nicety of sleight-of-hand manipulation, under the focussing cloth, for which I am sure he had no opportunity. Most suggestions which have been put forward for apparatus inside the camera would call for a lay-out of such complexity as to insure its discovery when I examined the camera; and most such suggestions fail to indicate how one plate caught the extra and the other missed it.

All these suggestions involve the use of fraud with reference to some part of the apparatus, or of the medium's hands, which might conceivably be subjected to a betraying search. If fraud were practiced, I should think it more likely to lie in some direction to which it might be anticipated that examination would not extend. Now Hope's person is one such direction; he was not to be searched, and he knew this. At any time in the dark-room, could he have ex-

posed the plate to the extra, by straightforward sleight of hand, without my detection? The plate was a fast one, to be sure; but in a room receiving fair light from outdoors, and equipped with several ordinary incandescent lamps, a 15-second exposure was not excessive. Some of the marks on the plate could be called flashes, but at least one of the extras is far beyond any such characterization. Moreover such trickery would have to bargain on movement of the plate as I worked with it. On all these grounds a pretty intense luminous effect would have to be used, if ordinary light were the agent; or a radioactive effect of considerable power. But Hope's dark-room is very dark indeed, and the probability seems small that he could have used anything of sufficient intensity and duration to impress the plate, without impressing my eye at the same time. It must be remembered that if he exposes the plate to the extra in the dark-room, he voluntarily gives up all the advantage of the radio-active class of tricks, for in the dark-room I can see an object so painted or coated.

We may, I think, abandon the notion that actual X-rays were used in the studio. An X-ray machine is far too expensive, and with it, the expectation that both my plates would show anything shown by either, would be far more acute.

In the face of all this, fairness demands that I quote the opinion of a photographer of long experience, who has handled the plate and sev-

eral reproductions in the course of making the half-tones for magazine and book use. He insists that the extras are luminous finger prints, the better one being from a finger on which a crude face had been painted. One or two of the marks near the corner I think are probably finger prints—though not luminous ones; I have already expressed the belief that I touched the emulsion side of one plate in separating them. But as regards the good extra under this suggestion, I leave it to the gentleman who advances it to explain how this came upon the plate—reiterating merely that Hope never touched the glass.

Another admission that ought to be made is this: Under repeated reproduction, the extras show a decided tendency toward grain, which my own face escapes. Sir Arthur has a lantern slide, made from a print from the original negative. From this slide, a new glass negative has been made, by photography with transmitted light; and in prints from this the best extra looks like the coarsest sort of a newspaper half-tone, the grain being its predominating feature. Examining the original under magnification in the light of this, one realizes that on it, too, the best extra is not so free from grain as the rest of the picture. This may or may not be significant; supporters of the picture's genuineness will attribute it to the fact that the process of getting the extra upon the plate is, in some respects at least, admittedly and necessarily dif-

ferent from the process of normal photography to which the balance of the plate is due, and that some divergence in appearance ought to occur.

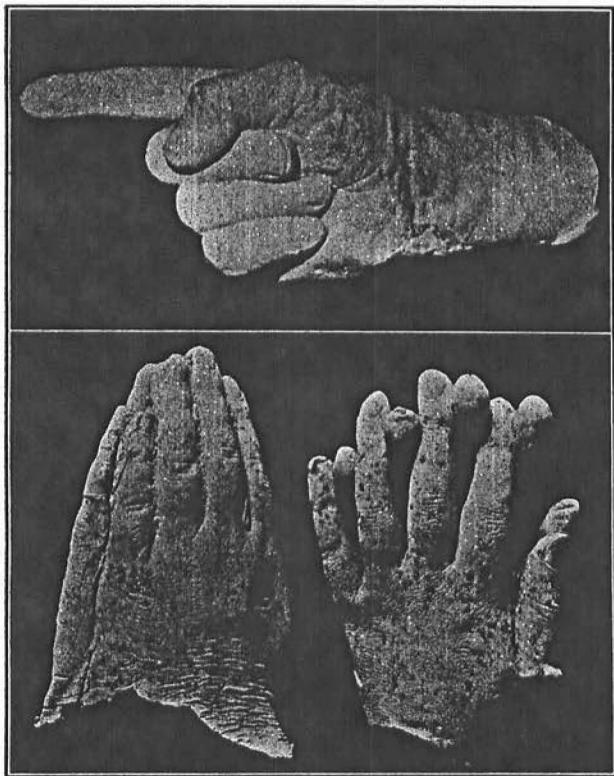
Of all the suggestions for fraudulent production, the one which in my judgment is least improbable, from the mechanical side alone, is that by some secret and well-concealed optical arrangement, an extraneous image was projected along with the normal image of me, through the camera's eye and upon the plate. There was no apparatus inside the camera by which such an image, coming in obliquely, could have been turned along the lens axis; the trick image would have had to come straight into the camera, from in front. The wall behind me was quite dark, and apparently unsuitable as a screen from which to reflect such an image. At the same time the completed picture shows marks which, along with the poorer extra, might be interpreted as an image of the path, in the suspended atmospheric dust, of a light beam thrown upon the wall behind me, from a corner of the room. A New York photographer insists that if this beam were of ultra-violet light, rather than the visible kind, the dark wall could have been chemically treated so as to act as a reflecting screen, without any effect visible to the eye; and as regards the light-track on the plate, ultra-violet would presumably be as freely scattered by the dust as visible wave-lengths.

If this suggestion is plausible mechanically, it suffers greatly when we consider it from the hu-

man side. The apparatus would be far too expensive for Hope, and presumably for the College, even. Besides, all the indications are that if Hope is a fraud, the College is a dupe rather than a collaborator. Even if the McKenzies were inclined to be conspirators, I doubt that they could get the apparatus from any firm of such low standing as to make the transaction a safe one.

One mechanical difficulty inherent in this or any other use of the ultra-violet part of the spectrum would be the difficulty of finding a source of the ultra-violet that is sufficiently free from the visible wave-lengths. Indeed, I am by no means convinced that such a source exists.

If the thing is a fraud, I am inclined, on mechanical and psychological grounds combined, to believe that it is a comparatively simple one. I think that the average person of some scientific knowledge is far too prone to look for elaborate scientific tricks, and to pass clean over some absurdly simple little home-made artifice which goes under his feet rather than over his head. But if Hope is a fraud, of this or any other sort, it is pretty certain that he has more than one bow to his string. For if he is a fraud, he has certainly substituted plates or plate-holders with other sitters, and this is one thing which he certainly did not do with me.



Three of the most surprising of the paraffin molds obtained with the Polish medium Kluski. Mr. Bird saw the originals in Paris, as described in Chapter XII.

## CHAPTER XII

### PSYCHIC ADVENTURES IN PARIS

PSYCHIC matters in Paris are in the hands of the Institut Metapsychique, of which Dr. Gustave Geley is the research officer, and Prof. Charles Richet the moving spirit among the administrative officers. Dr. Geley, like McKenzie, has his living quarters at the Institut, out on the Avenue Niel, in a rather pleasant quarter of Paris. I had a very interesting afternoon with him, in the course of which he showed me his laboratory and the exhibits of his work with the mediums who have sat with him.

At the moment, he was without any mediums. Eva C., the medium to whom a French investigator would naturally turn, and with whom Geley and other French and German individual researchers and commissions have had many sittings, was on the point of getting married, and had definitely retired from mediumship. The Polish medium, Franek Kluski, who had held a lengthy series of tests before the Institut, was home in Warsaw again. Dr. Geley would have been very glad to have me remain in Paris until the first week of April, for a series of seances with a comparatively new medium, but the probable phenomena were not such as to make it worth while for me to do this.

My visit to the Institut was not, however,

without one result worthy of inclusion here. Kluski, just mentioned, is a materializing medium. In sitting with him, Geley had conceived the notion of getting a permanent record of the presence of the materialized forms. He had accordingly had always on hand a supply of melted paraffin, and the "spirits" had got quite into the way of accepting his invitation that they utilize this to leave behind casts of their hands and feet.

The existence of these casts had been chronicled all over the world, so that everybody interested in things psychic knew of them. But they had never been adequately described, in America at least, and in common I believe with most other Americans I was under a fundamental misapprehension as to their exact nature. Probably through the unfortunate use of the term "casts" in describing them, I had visualized them as made by holding the materialized (or otherwise, if one be a skeptic) hands or feet in the body of the paraffin until the latter had hardened. The point that the members in question must be what they were alleged to be, else they would not be able to get out of the paraffin, had been made and duly appreciated, and the picture in my mind was simply of the escape, by dematerialization or trickery, of a hand or foot from the solidified mass in the bucket, leaving an empty mold in the paraffin from which a cast might then be made. The facts, as I saw after being in Dr. Geley's museum for about three

seconds, are quite different and vastly more remarkable.

The extraneous hand (whatever its nature we may safely call it that) is in point of fact immersed in the vessel of paraffin and at once withdrawn, coated with a thin shell of the liquid, which at once congeals. Whether repeated dipping is employed to increase the thickness of the paraffin shell I do not know. But it is from this thin shell, much less than a sixteenth-inch thick, that the extraneous hand (or foot) is withdrawn, leaving not a mold as one would ordinarily understand this term, but actually a glove of paraffin, of the thickness specified. This is preserved and made more or less permanent by filling it with plaster.

Dr. Geley has in his little museum a score or more of these molds, mostly hands but including a few feet. In a few the paraffin has been deliberately removed to give a view of the plaster surface, which of course corresponds far better to the original than does the outer surface of the paraffin. But in every case the paraffin shell is so light and so destructible that it has chipped off more or less, spontaneously. When one looks at these delicate shells, the claim that the original could have been withdrawn only by a process of dematerialization seems worthy of the most serious consideration.

If one has a hand, of flesh and blood or of ectoplasm or of some other material, immersed in a mold of paraffin of the sort which I had

pictured before going to Paris, one would not ordinarily expect to be able to withdraw it. But one would feel that, if it were sufficiently flexible, it might be possible to get it out. In the withdrawal, however, with the accompanying flexing, one would be quite certain that considerable local pressures would be exerted upon certain points of the mold. If the mold were a solid mass of paraffin supported in a bucket or tray, this would be all very well; but if it were merely a thin shell of paraffin, it would be quite absurd to imagine that it would not be disrupted.

The suggestion has been made, from many quarters, that the paraffin hands are made with a rubber glove, inflated during the molding and deflated for withdrawal. The answer is made that they show far too much detail about the knuckles and finger-nails to admit this hypothesis. Dr. Geley was not content with this statement of general principle; he tried to get a cast in this way. He has it now, in his museum; it is a caricature of a hand, formless as regards both the hand itself and the fingers, with the latter flopping loosely in all directions, and with no skin structure at all. The slightest comparison with the shells obtained through the medium shows the latter to be of a totally distinct species. Further, the casts which Dr. Geley shows are very plainly not all from the same original. They differ widely in size—so much so as to enable one to say positively that not all are from human originals.

To dispose of the possibility that the paraffin shells were manufactured at leisure outside and brought into the seance room in finished state, Geley mixed a foreign substance with his paraffin on one occasion. The molds obtained were found to be of identical composition with the paraffin that had been prepared for the seance, with the identical percentage of the diluent. It goes without saying that in all sittings the most rigid control of the medium's hands and feet was practiced.

On every ground, these paraffin shells of hands and feet are an extraordinarily interesting phenomenon, and one which carries a very large element of conviction with it. One cannot imagine any possibility of making these extremely delicate structures, and withdrawing the original from them without the slightest damage. Geley does not consider that they prove the agency of discarnate personalities; he prefers to think of a projection of ideas from the medium's mind, in such form as to create this concrete objective image. But whatever particular theory is put forward to explain them, these paraffin gloves make a better case for the supernormal than anything else I have seen.

Yet we must not be too hasty. I had a long interview with Prof. Richet, which I need report in no detail in view of the fact that little was said that does not appear in Richet's book "Thirty Years of Psychic Research." He gave me one interesting little demonstration, how-

ever, which illustrates much though proving nothing. The talk ran for a moment on psychic lights, and we agreed that they were different in their appearance from any ordinary artificial light. But Prof. Richet arose and conducted me into a dark closet, and immediately the door was shut, there was a most active illumination, not greatly dissimilar from the psychic lights, falling short mainly in the fact that the bright spot ran back and forth over a very limited distance. He opened the door and showed me the secret. He had constructed a neon tube about six feet long, and an inch in diameter. Holding this in one hand and running the other rapidly up and down it, the induced frictional electric charge was quite sufficient to make a brilliant glow in the neon at the point of the tube where the hand had contact. He did not at all mean to imply that psychic lights were thus produced, but merely to emphasize that we should not recognize them as supernormal while we are still in the dark as to their exact cause. I do not think it would be possible to apply this text strictly, for the cause might conceivably baffle us long after we had established that the phenomena really occurred without trickery on the medium's part; but it is a useful text to bear in mind, withal.

## CHAPTER XIII

### PSYCHIC ADVENTURES IN BERLIN AND MUNICH

LEAVING Paris on March 17th., and stopping overnight in Amsterdam, I reached Berlin late on the evening of Sunday, the 18th. Dr. Gradenwitz, the Berlin correspondent of the *Scientific American*, was expecting me, and had arranged to get me in touch with so much of psychic research as was going on in the German capital at the time. This included, first of all, a visit to the laboratory of Herr Fritz Grunewald, in the Charlottenberg section of the city. Herr Grunewald was, and I believe still is, an electrical engineer in the employ of one of Germany's biggest combines. For many years he has pursued the idea of bringing to bear upon the problems of mediumship all the resources of experimental physics, with the result that he has assembled in his quarters what is by all means the finest array of general and special apparatus for this work in the world. Since the Copenhagen Psychic Research Congress of 1922, where this apparatus was on exhibition, much has been done toward making his designs available for the use of other investigators.

The work-room of the laboratory, in which seances are held, is equipped with light-proof curtains making the attainment of perfect darkness a matter of a few seconds only. The medium is

seated in a large wicker chair on a spring balance, the deflections of which are transmitted to and recorded by a mirror galvanometer. The bare bones of a cabinet surround this chair, so that the medium may sit in cabinet when he so wishes.

A large number of anatomical instruments is present—apparatus for measuring the respiration, temperature, blood pressure, pulse, and all the other functions of the medium. Elaborate systems of recording tapes are at hand, which may be hitched up in any desired combination so that as many or as few items are recorded upon a single tape as the investigator wishes. The lighting of the room, both red and white, is controlled from a switchboard, and the variations in the illumination from moment to moment can be recorded automatically if desired.

Much of the apparatus to be found here is intelligible only in connection with a statement as to how and why it has been used. Thus, with one medium Grunewald obtained materialization effects, which he studied spectroscopically with regard to their colors and their chemical constitution, and photometrically as regards their luminous intensity. Other apparatus is designed to determine whether the medium, from a distance and by mere exercise of will-power, can exert a force of attraction or repulsion; and if so, to measure this force. It is found by Grunewald that many mediums possess curious powers of deflecting the magnetic

needle, and in one corner he has a regular electro-magnetic laboratory to study this phase.

It goes without saying that Grunewald is an expert photographer, and that he has all facilities for taking care of this end of the work of examining mediums. Numerous cameras and lenses of various types, with all sorts of automatic apparatus for taking exposures at regular intervals, or when other instruments give certain critical readings, are to be found scattered about the premises.

One might suppose, after going over the large apartment which is given over to the housing of all this apparatus, that the proprietor would be one supremely happy human—a man who had found what he wanted to do, and was doing it. This is not quite in line with the facts. Herr Grunewald, after showing you over the premises, and sitting you down to the modest tea to which Germans of the professional classes nowadays restrict their hospitality, smiles a sad, wan smile, and voices his naïve complaint. He has the finest psychic laboratory in the world—and he can induce no medium to work in it with him. Is it not a great pity? And the visitor, perhaps, draws a mental picture of a medium in that chair, hitched simultaneously to fifty-seven varieties of recording apparatus; and he contrasts this with the usual seance-room surroundings. Then, if he be tactful, he does not remind Herr Grunewald that humans are different from chemicals and electric charges, in that, if you

want to investigate them, you have to proceed with their consent and in a manner agreeable to them. No, he just echoes Herr Grunewald's regrets, and lets it go at that.

And yet, mediums who will sit more or less under the conditions which a sight of Grunewald's laboratory suggests are not entirely non-existent. For some months before I had sailed, the world was full of the tales that came out of Munich, of a wonderful new medium who was sitting there. Willy Sch. was the name under which he was announced. He had been discovered by the Baron von Schrenck Notzing, a practising physician of some note and more or less of a dabbler in scientific topics as well. He had been sitting for the Baron exclusively, and a very decent mechanism of control, if not of scientific examination, had been set up. The climax came with a series of seances at which the medium was confined within a huge wire cage a good deal like a candle-extinguisher, while all sorts of things went on in the room outside the cage. Geley had handed me a copy of the *Journal Metapsychique*, edited by himself, in which appeared a statement signed by about a hundred German scientists of some distinction. These gentlemen had come to Munich, all profoundly skeptical, some openly hostile; and after from one to eighteen sittings each, without a dissenting voice they agreed that they had seen the evolution of ectoplasm from the medium, and numerous other physical phenomena.

The Baron had had some unfortunate experiences with newspaper men, and had formed a first-class German hate for them; and it was only too evident that the *Scientific American* would be included in the proscribed class. So I carried several introductions to him which carefully put the soft pedal on my professional identity, and made me appear merely as an American of distinguished connections, who was being recommended to the Baron's courtesies; and, armed with these and others which I expected to pick up in Berlin, it was my hope to get into at least one of the seances with Willy.

Herr Grunewald is particularly well and favorably known to the Baron, and, partly at his own suggestion and partly at Dr. Gradenwitz', it was agreed that if he were to go to Munich with me, the probabilities of our being turned down were negligible. He was all prepared to do this, when it occurred to him that he could call the Baron up by long distance and make a definite appointment. The result killed the trip, so far as Herr Grunewald was concerned. The Baron informed him sadly over the wire that Willy was "ausgeknipft," which is very faithfully rendered by "skipped out." He had got tired of his arrangement with the Baron, and had run off and returned to his father in a little town near the Austro-Bavarian frontier. As the Baron understood it, they were prepared to give seances, for a consideration, to any and all applicants. There was no prospect, so far

as he knew, of his getting his medium back.

Lacking time to go to Warsaw or Braunau in search of a sitting with Kluski or with Willy, I went on to Munich alone, saw the Baron, and had a very pleasant chat with him after presenting my letters. The Baron was very bitter at Willy, and at the unkind fates that had interfered in what he had hoped to make an epoch-marking scientific investigation. "Schade" and "schändlich," with an occasional relapse to the less vigorous "unglücklich," constituted a major part of his conversation, and he really seemed to be pretty much broken up with the turn of affairs. He showed me Willy's seance room and all the apparatus, which was frankly modeled after Grunewald; and then I left him. When I got back to England I was the first messenger of Willy's desertion, and the general expectation among the British spiritualists with whom I talked in the two days preceding my final departure seemed to be that the enterprising Mr. McKenzie would now undoubtedly move heaven and earth to get Willy at the College.

## CHAPTER XIV

### APPORTS IN BERLIN

**I**N going to Berlin, I had no idea whatever of having a seance, for I knew of no medium there. I planned only to see Grunewald, confer with Dr. Gradenwitz over matters of general editorial interest, and then pass on. But Dr. Gradenwitz had come in touch with Dr. Schwab, and had arranged tentatively for a sitting with Frau Vollhard. After the hitch which I have already noted in Chapter V had been ironed out, this was made definite, and on Tuesday evening, March 20th., I sat with this medium.

Dr. Schwab has just published in book form, under the title "Teleplasma und Telekinese," an account of his experiences with Frau Vollhard, and the manuscript which he had for me was in turn a resumé of the book. What he calls teleplasma, of course, is the ectoplasm of other investigators.

Dr. Schwab tells us that he first became acquainted with Frau Vollhard in the fall of 1920. Prior to her work with him, she sat only in the most restricted circle of her intimate acquaintances. At these seances telekinetic phenomena occurred, together with numerous apports. During this time nothing was seen of ectoplasm or materializations.

I may create a little diversion here by remark-

ing that the apport is quite distinct from ordinary telekinesis, in that it involves the bringing into the room of something that presumably was not there to begin with. The apport is the vehicle of some of the most remarkable stories, and it may not be out of place to set down one or two of these, to indicate the alleged range of the phenomenon which I was to see from Frau Vollhard.

One medium, name unstated, produced habitually apports of singing birds. Though a careful search was made before all his sittings of his anatomical cavities, and nothing found, the verdict of the investigators was to the effect that he was bringing the birds into the room concealed in his intestinal vent. The idea of a bird's surviving such an experience, and coming out singing, struck me as decidedly humorous.

Another tale, told with a wealth of corroborative detail, had to do with an Australian medium who was producing apports of old Egyptian vases. He was on the point of getting himself pretty generally recognized as a genuine medium, when somebody took a few of his vases to an authority on antiques, and they were pronounced forgeries. The medium was on this ground condemned as a fraud, and just about ruined. The British spiritualists who tell the story regard this as altogether hasty. They say that there are probably more fake Egyptian vases in existence than genuine ones, and they ask us to picture the state of mind of some

dishonest dealer in Alexandria or Cairo who finds items continually missing from his stock, in the most inexplicable manner. From this angle, it does seem a trifle severe to insist that a medium carry out his apports with genuine vases only, and eschew the counterfeit article.

To return to Frau Vollhard, however. Dr. Schwab, soon after his introduction to her, set out to remodel her sittings. He set up control methods, put into effect better conditions for observation, brought in apparatus of various sorts, kept a permanent record of all the sessions in a form available for scientific purposes, interested other scientists in the medium, and got independent witnesses to the phenomena. Frau Vollhard seems to have been sufficiently impressed by the arguments of scientific expediency which he put forward, to have submitted to all this without serious protest. She has a limit beyond which she will not go, however. In conversation about her tea-table, the abstract proposition was advanced of whether she would qualify for our formal investigation, and whether there would be any prospect of her winning our award for successful physical phenomena; and she indicated that, even for the purpose of competing for such a perfectly colossal number of marks, she would not sit in any clothes except her own, and would not submit to other than a perfunctory search.

One surprising result of Dr. Schwab's resort to scientific methods was a change in the me-

dium's scope. When first he sought to get a photographic record of the telekinetic movement of objects, he was greatly surprised, on development of the plates, to find ectoplasm shown thereon. He pursued the lead thus given, and obtained many photographs and visible appearances of this substance. One would be fairly certain that the medium was not sufficiently well-read to have encountered any description of this phenomenon; but, as indicated in Chapter V, one would not have the same assurance regarding her daughter.

In sitting for ectoplasm, darkness usually obtains, according to Dr. Schwab, though occasionally red light is tolerated. The medium sits at the table, with her two hands held by the sitters at her either side. Under no circumstances will she employ a cabinet; she fears even to sit behind a curtain. Enough light, says Dr. Schwab, comes in at the windows to make distinguishable the outlines of the sitters; but when I sat this was not the case. In addition to her hands, the medium's feet are usually controlled. It is customary to have three cameras close to the medium, pointed at her from various directions; with their tripods, they circumscribe greatly the movements of all members of the circle. When I sat, these were in the room but not set up, since there was no idea of getting anything save apports. The Doctor carries an electric flashlight, with a red glass, and does not hesitate to use it at his pleasure.

Once the room is darkened, the medium is observed to breathe more rapidly, to shudder and groan, etc., etc. In the more extreme cases Dr. Schwab compares her mouthings to those of a woman in childbirth—this, by the way, is far from unique among female mediums. The other sitters feel cool winds across their hands. The phenomenon under production moves rapidly to a climax, after which it usually ceases and the medium returns rapidly to normal.

Dr. Schwab illustrates his descriptions of this medium's ectoplasm by several photographs. These bear out his statement that it is usually seen streaming from the medium's mouth. Marks of her teeth are often to be found in it, with a permanence and persistence which would not be expected if it were a textile fabric of any sort. Dr. Schwab regards this as very strong evidence that it is actually a plastic substance that issues from her mouth. Sometimes he finds it on her shoulder, without any visible indication of how it got there. In structure it varies considerably, being sometimes quite homogeneous, at others in the nature of a honeycomb. It is present in great quantities, at times extending in a wide band from the mouth clear to the feet (while the medium is seated).

Not long before the time when I sat with her, the medium had without any apparent reason abandoned the production of ectoplasm, and returned to her original "line." Accordingly I was promised some apports with reasonable as-

surance, but was given to understand that was all that was likely to happen.

The sitters at my seance were Dr. Schwab, Dr. Gradenwitz, the medium's daughter, and two other gentlemen, one of whom was addressed as "Herr Inspektor," and the other of whom I gathered also occupied some official position. They were both attending for the first time. The medium sat between Dr. Gradenwitz and myself. Next to me came Dr. Schwab and then the daughter; on Dr. Gradenwitz' side of the table were the two other gentlemen. There was complete darkness save when Dr. Schwab flashed his red torch to make an observation of any sort.

There were no preliminaries whatever; we simply sat down and waited, conversing the while. We had been so but a moment or two when the medium began to make her weird noises. These worked up to a climax quite rapidly; there was a faint rustling, and the medium groaned wildly and repeatedly, and insisted that something had happened. Dr. Schwab flashed his light, and on the table was seen a branch of box-tree, perfectly fresh. I was informed that this always constituted the first apport of any sitting with Frau Vollhard. Though I knew what the answer ought to be, I asked whence it came, and was given the correct reply—"nobody knows." It was then stated that it apparently came direct from the tree, since on clear evenings it was always dry as it fell upon the table,

but when it was raining outdoors, it was invariably wet. Of course, this does not necessarily prove anything more than great attention to detail, but it struck me as interesting if true.

Dr. Schwab had taken the medium's pulse as we sat down, and he took it again immediately after the appearance of the box branch. I failed to make a note at the time of the exact figures, and have forgotten them; in fact, I do not remember with certainty whether the pulse had been accelerated or decelerated. The one or the other was the case, however, to an altogether startling degree. The higher reading, whether the first or the last, was somewhere in the neighborhood of 60 per cent in excess of the lower one. This, assuming Dr. Schwab's good faith (his reading was not verified by any of the other sitters) would go a long way toward establishing the *bona fides* of the medium's condition of abnormality. It ought to be stated explicitly that she was not in a trance in the same sense that a medium usually goes into trance, and that there was no suggestion of the substitution of a control for her own personality. But she was apparently unconscious for a time at least, and certainly one got the impression that she did not know what had happened until the light came on and she saw.

After five or ten minutes of desultory conversation, during the first part of which the medium still gave some evidences of physical suffering, she had calmed down and seemed

quite normal again. The light was accordingly once more dispensed with and the medium's hands once more taken under control by Dr. Gradenwitz and myself. She went through much the same routine as before, with perhaps even more struggling to free her hands. As her convulsions reached a climax there came a great clattering upon the table. My impressions were that the object, whatever it was, had come from over the medium's shoulder; but I was at a loss to find specific grounds for this feeling. The light was made, and the apport found to be a pair of small slates, about five inches by eight, tied together with twine and sealed with wax.

The medium, her daughter, and Dr. Schwab at once displayed extreme excitement, and gave us the history of the slates. Some four months previously, according to this narrative, it had been intended to try the medium at slate writing, and this package had been prepared, in advance of the expected sitting. Placed in a drawer, the bundle had mysteriously disappeared, and nothing had been seen of it since. Great interest was displayed in the question whether now a message would be found to have come upon the slates, and they were cut apart for examination. The regular members of the circle were disappointed to find no writing upon them, but were partly reconciled when it was pointed out that the slate pencil which had been inside the slates when they were tied up had dis-

appeared. In the nature of the case, no corroboration was or could be offered of all this.

The medium claimed extreme exhaustion after this, which was accepted as a matter of course by the other sitters. She finally consented, rather against her better judgment, to go under once more and see what she would bring back with her. The crisis came with remarkable promptness, as in the two previous trials. The apport made a rather terrifying noise as it fell upon the table, and was found, when we got the light, to be an ordinary stone, two or three times the size of a hen's egg. It was quite warm as I picked it up for examination—decidedly warmer than it could have got through simple contact with the person of one of the sitters. I had no impressions as to the direction from which it struck the table, but most of the other sitters thought that after striking the first time, it had skittered away from the medium.

Frau Vollhard stated emphatically that it was altogether extraordinary to get results so quickly and with so little travail. She was quite positive that I was responsible for this, having contributed an unusually large amount of energy. The claim reminded me that the London spiritualists with whom I had sat before Sloan and Powell had all expressed surprise that such fine results had been got in the presence of a stranger and a new sitter, and had all advanced the opinion that I had, if not actual mediumistic power, at least the ability to chip in with a

heavy contribution of psychic energy. Sloan himself insisted that I had done this, that he had been conscious of great aid from me. If the phenomena are genuine, there is doubtless something in this. I suspect that it is quite customary for mediums of low grade to encourage their sitters with this sort of talk, however.

The strongest circumstance in favor of the genuineness of Frau Vollhard's apports is that hands were joined all around the circle. If there were fraud, therefore, there would have to be two guilty members, and, considering the fact that they were the only regulars present, the guilt would necessarily lodge with the medium's daughter and the doctor. It seems quite incredible that Schwab would publish a book purporting to carry a serious scientific examination of a series of phenomena in the fraudulent production of which he was a party.

Apparently the only escape from this line of reasoning would lie in the assumption that the premises are fitted with trap doors, etc., and that there is a concealed confederate. In such event, the doctor might be a dupe instead of a conspirator. The obviously abnormal condition of the medium, though depending to a considerable degree upon Dr. Schwab's good faith, is still a point in favor of the good faith of the whole show. But no attempt was made to present conclusive testimony as to this good faith. As with most of my sittings, one who had strong

convictions in either direction would have found no reason to revise these.

The party now adjourned to the tea table, and here we were favored with one more manifestation. Frau Vollhard suddenly gave a very realistic shriek of pain, and held out her hand for all to see. On the back of the hand were a quantity of vivid red marks, some actually bleeding. They had apparently been made by some instrument with sharp points. A fork was the natural first thought, but a single thrust from a single fork would not have been adequate. The marks were arranged in a rather regular square, three or four equidistant rows of three or four equidistant marks each. A handful of forks could have been held in such manner as to inflict these wounds, but no single instrument of any sort that I ever saw would have done the trick—unless it be a nutmeg grater. The holes were small and round, and quite deep; after ten or fifteen minutes they were still plainly to be seen. They were very obviously fresh when first announced, and though taken quite by surprise when the medium shrieked, I was pretty certain that her hand was in plain view at the time. Dr. Schwab had a name (stigmatisation) for the phenomenon, which he stated was not uncommon.

Aside from the difficulty of seeing just how it was done—a difficulty which might be avoided by insisting that the wounds were made a few seconds in advance, and announced only at a favorable opportunity—this incident made a rather

bad impression upon me, when regarded from the viewpoint of abnormal psychology. In view of the very definite suggestion that the mediumship of Eva C. and Willy Sch., to mention but two fairly well established cases, is accompanied by abnormal sex phenomena, I think the resemblance of Frau Vollhard's stigmatisation to actual flagellation is worthy of examination.

Dr. Gradenwitz tells me that at a later sitting which he attended with this medium, her hands were held at either side by two highly skeptical members of the Medical Society for Psychic Research. After the medium came out of one of her crises on this occasion, two wooden rings were found, unbroken, one about the arm of each of these doctors. If the medium were dressed on this occasion as when I saw her, it would have been quite out of the question for these to have been concealed anywhere about her arms and shoulders, and I think we may assume that they were given competent examination against the possibility that they were, themselves, trick rings. This seems to exhaust the normal explanations, and leaves us only with the alternative of discrediting Dr. Gradenwitz, or accepting the phenomenon. If I say this, however, I ought also in fairness to say that the act is entirely in accord with what the spiritualists believe may be done through dematerialization and rematerialization, and with performances in behalf of which they offer pretty live testimony.

## CHAPTER XV

### HOME AGAIN—AND A SEANCE WITH ADA BESINNET

ORIGINAL plans contemplated no American supplement to my European expedition. But at a dinner given for him by Mr. Charles Allen Munn, Sir Arthur remarked that, during his progress through the middle west, he would probably find an opportunity to stop at Toledo for a seance with Miss Besinnet. He thought that if he did this, Miss Besinnet would be willing, in spite of her refusal to sit with our Committee, to have me in the circle in the same strictly personal capacity in which I had appeared at my British sittings. Mr. Munn responding with a nod to the lifted eyebrow by means of which I interrogated him regarding the item of expense, Sir Arthur was given *carte blanche* on the spot to arrange this sitting if he could. After one or two letters and telegrams expressing doubt of his own ability to get to Toledo, he finally wired me to meet him there on Thursday, April 26th.

The seance was held in the dining room of the residence of Dr. John S. Pyle, at 1064 Prospect St. Dr. Pyle is one of Toledo's leading medical practitioners. He has known Miss Besinnet from the age of twelve, and has watched her mediumship develop with an interest which I take to be in about equal parts professional, sci-

entific, and personal. Of the other members of the group, Dr. Horace Westwood and Mr. W. W. Roche demand special mention. Both were very active in defense of Miss Besinnet against the unfortunate misstatements of Mr. Black, to which I have referred in an earlier chapter. Dr. Westwood is the pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Toledo, and has for some time been interested in Miss Besinnet's mediumship. Mr. Roche is with the Toledo *News-Bee* in an editorial rather than a mere reportorial capacity, and is a very old and very close friend of the medium—sufficiently so to lend color of plausibility to the report, which one hears now and again, that they are to marry. Of the other sitters, nothing need be said *in extenso*, beyond the fact that Mr. Roche's presence was balanced by that of Mrs. Blanchard, of the *Blade*.

Everybody save Sir Arthur and I was a close personal friend of the medium, of long standing; and Sir Arthur had sat with her often enough almost to qualify him as such. So from the spiritist viewpoint a brilliantly successful seance might be looked for.

The party assembled quite early, and had a very pleasant session over Dr. Pyle's supper table. It is Miss Besinnet's custom, whenever possible, to get a bit of social contact before the actual seance, by way of setting up an atmosphere. I found her to be a bit above average height for a woman, and of powerful build, with large face. All the pictures I have seen of

her give the impression of coarseness of features; meeting her in the flesh one does not see this. She was dressed in black, with rather low neck and long sleeves of net.

Dr. Pyle lives in a detached cottage, of the sort to be found in quantities in the outlying residence sections of America's larger cities. For my European readers, "villa" is the word. To put the dining room into shape for the sitting considerable preparation was involved, in which all hands joined. I watched carefully for indications that certain jobs were reserved for certain people, and found absolutely nothing to justify such a supposition. Nor, so far as I could see, were the chairs, table, etc., placed in any particular spots. I know that some of them were placed by me, and not subsequently disturbed.

Miss Besinnet sits only in absolute darkness, and it is no easy task to attain this in a room not specially constructed or at least specially equipped. The two windows were sealed by means of fitted dark curtains, which were placed close to the glass, outside the conventional dark shades. The kitchen door was light-tight when closed. In recognition of the hot evening, an attempt was made to darken the kitchen and sit with this door open, but it had to be abandoned. The room was not really uncomfortable, though it could have been much cooler without hurting anybody's feelings.

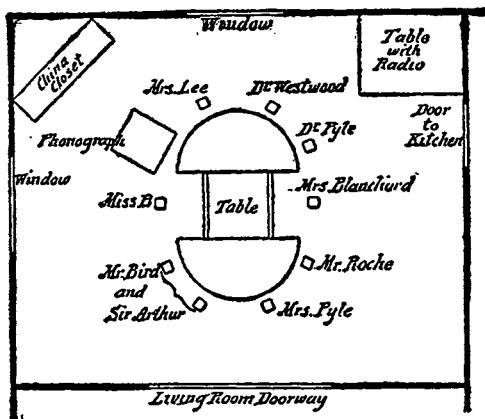
The real problem was created by the living room, but the solution was surprisingly simple.

This room is open to the street through a door, and quantities of windows on three sides of the house; to darken it would be a hopeless task. It joins the dining room through a double doorway. The big rug that carpeted the dining room was taken up bodily, after considerable stevedoring of the dining-room furniture to free it, and hung in this doorway. Down one side of the rug was a series of loops, with nails to match along the top of the doorway. With these and pins down the sides and a few miscellaneous heavy objects to anchor it at the bottom, the rug was without difficulty adjusted so as to cut off completely the light from the front of the house. I was informed that while seances had been held at the Pyle residence before, they had not been nearly so frequent as this degree of preparedness might lead one to assume.

The dining room was rather full of furniture. In addition to the regular extension table of customary dining-room style, and the chairs which had to be supplemented from all over the house, there was a china closet of large size, a cabinet phonograph of average bulk, and in the corner next the kitchen a serving table which had been converted into a stand for the radio outfit. The latter was of the vacuum-tube type, and if Miss Besinnet's mediumship did not long antedate the vogue of wireless, suspicion might have been directed to it. Its presence was in point of fact entirely casual, and it had nothing to do with the

sound phenomena which distinguished the seance.

Miss Besinnet's controls, for some reason not formulated, demand a "solid" table, without cracks. The extension table does not satisfy this requirement in either of its familiar conditions; for whether the leaves be included, or omitted



The two chairs bracketed under the names of Sir Arthur and Mr. Bird were occupied alternately by these two sitters, who were interchanged several times during the sitting.

The seance of April 26th with Miss Besinnet

and the table closed, there is at least one pronounced junction extending across from side to side. But when the table is opened as though for the reception of two or three leaves, and left in this state, the operators accept this as the equivalent of two simple, solid tables, and do

their work on one or both ends, as the convenience of the moment dictates. The diagram will further emphasize what would be clear in any event, that the two ends of the table remain connected by the longitudinal "runners," along which the table slides on itself in opening and closing. The medium sits, not actually at the table at all, but rather at the opening in the table. If she is a trickster, this arrangement obviously gives her better access to all parts of the table than she would have with a more conventional arrangement; and in this event, the reason for leaving the table open is its size rather than its possession of a joint. But the extent to which she could circulate into and out of the "well" in the center of the table would, after all, be problematical. Presumably the presence of the runners would hinder such circulation in some ways; and I suspect that in others it would help. They would certainly be very effective as landmarks.

Miss Besinnet always has music, not merely at the beginning but throughout the sitting, to "keep up the power" to the necessary pitch—or to make a racket that will drown out the noise of her movements, whichever you prefer. This music is produced phonographically; and since her controls insist upon their own favorite and familiar airs, the medium carries her own records about with her. She has carried them, among other places, to Washington and to London, and she will not attempt to sit without them.

Their unpacking was delegated to me. From a large suitcase I removed some fifty disk records, of two sizes; and, by way of further apparatus for the seance, two tambourines, a sectional trumpet of heavy cardboard or cheap imitation leather, a writing tablet, a pencil, and about ten yards of rope in two pieces. All this I piled indiscriminately upon the table. Miss Besinnet then sorted the records into three groups—vocal, and loud and soft instrumental.

The phonograph with its cabinet was placed at the medium's left, where there was barely room for it between the table and the china closet. Obviously one of the sitters must assume the responsibility of tending it during the sitting and this privilege was offered me. I declined, on the ground that it would take too much of my attention; and on the whole, I think this was a wise decision. As my account progresses, however, it will be readily understood that there were moments when I wished I were at the machine; and in a series of sittings I should take this position at least once. The duty of running the phonograph was finally assigned to Mrs. Lee; the rest of the company sat as diagrammed. After we sat down there was no shifting of seats, to which any objection was possible; the interchange between Sir Arthur and myself, which was made three times, was always for a definite and legitimate purpose of enabling one or the other of us to participate in some definite phenomenon, or undertake some definite test.

The phonograph and china closet seemed an effective barrier against any attempt by the medium to circulate about the room to her left. Between the possibility that if she had tried it Sir Arthur or I should have observed it, and the fact that at almost all times the one of us who was next her at the moment had good reason for believing her to be in her seat, or at the worst in her place, I think there is little profit in speculating about the extent to which she may have circulated in the other direction. If she went to any appreciable distance from her chair at any time, it was to occupy the space in the center of the table.

Mrs. Lee had considerable trouble with the phonograph. The seance was well along before she had learned just where to go in the dark for the various handles, levers, etc.; and at no time was she able to bring together the hole in the record and the peg on the bed of the machine with any degree of precision. Unless this ineptness was assumed, it would have bearing upon the possibilities of a dark seance; Mrs. Lee must have sat many times with Miss Besinnet, and ought to be as adept as any ordinary person would ordinarily become.

Miss Besinnet's controls are two in number. Pansy, a little girl, speaks with considerable freedom in a lisping childish voice; Black Cloud, the inevitable Indian, throws in two or three words at a time, in taciturn, staccato grunts. Both are apt to rap instead of speaking, if what they have

to say can be covered by the code. Like a good Indian, Black Cloud is hard to amuse; but he finds white squaws rather more to be laughed at than the generality of things, and he laughs at them by gently shaking the table. The tendency expressed by his statement "white squaw talk too much" seems to arouse a mingled emotion of amusement and disgust in him. Both controls were in poor voice on this occasion, and it was often difficult or impossible to make out what they were saying. I was informed that this was not unusual, and that they were in the bargain even less loquacious tonight than ordinarily.

One always inquires, in sitting with an unfamiliar medium, what disposition to make of the hands. In Miss Besinnet's presence, these are placed, to begin with, flat on the table, and not joined in any way. Anything different which the controls may desire during the seance is either indicated, or more likely, actually carried out by seizure of the hands involved. This made clear, and the assurance being had that we were all in our places and ready, the white lights were replaced by the single red bulb, and almost at once this too was extinguished, leaving us in the familiar total darkness.

At intervals, one or another of the sitters would now ask "Are you there, Ada?" After perhaps five minutes, the question failed to elicit an answer; so someone asked "Are you here, Black Cloud?" The answer came "Yes," in faint raps. In race-track parlance, we were off.

Even before the medium was thus marked as having gone under, lights appeared, quite bright and of considerable range of speed and travel. I was told that this was entirely regular. After the controls took charge, the lights continued for some time to be the only phenomena. Presently vocal manifestations began, and continued intermittently throughout.

These were confined to singing and whistling. Sometimes a tune would be played from end to end on the phonograph, or a song sung thereon, without evoking any accompaniment. Sometimes, however, a whistler would join in with the tune, or one of numerous singers would make his (or her) contribution to the song.

These voices were the most extraordinary phenomenon of the sort that I have ever heard, or indeed that I can imagine. They came quite distinctly from the open well in the center of the table. On one occasion the large end of the trumpet was presented to me, curiously enough at the level of the table, for me to put my ear to it and verify that the singing was not in it. I leaned down and did as directed, and the trumpet was certainly silent.

The voices were tenor, bass and soprano, as well as the alto which the medium's speaking voice would lead one to expect from her. They possessed without exception the touch of personal characteristics. One female voice had a distinct Irish lilt. One male voice was a prodigious rich tenor, of volume sufficient to fill a

cathedral. This particular singer has a name—he is Dan, an American soldier, killed in the war. He attends all Miss Besinnet's seances. Collectively, these singing voices ran the gamut of the piano, from the tinkliest treble to the most booming bass. Every one of them is a real singer, and not merely a voice that sings. The whistling went away ahead of any professional performance that I have ever heard. Indeed, I believe I have never heard a tune carried so well, or with such rich musical effect, by any whistler as by the voice that came from under the table. The amazing character of this whole singing and whistling performance simply cannot be exaggerated. It would be rash to insist that the medium could not possibly do it all; cases are recorded of human voices with a range as wide as five full octaves. But I should be greatly surprised to find a voice of extreme range, with such good tone and such good control near its extremes, as was heard in these seance voices. And that is waiving entirely the fact that the sounds didn't appear to come from the medium's throat.

If the sitters in a position to testify may be believed, the operation of the phonograph was at times taken over by the controls. Mrs. Lee had the three piles of records on the table before her. It was her duty to keep the machine wound and supplied with records. On the second or third record, the music was abruptly cut off after the first couple of notes. Mrs. Lee

spoke up and said she had not touched the machine; whereupon Black Cloud explained by raps, in answer to direct questions, that he had done it, because he wanted a softer record. Thereafter throughout the seance, when a record was stopped, the motor wound, the top lifted to increase the volume or lowered to reduce it, and occasionally when a record was put on the machine, Mrs. Lee would state whether she had or had not done it. Usually when she entered a disclaimer, Dr. Westwood was able to assert that she certainly had not done it, that both her hands were under his control in one way or another.

Ordinarily when a change of records was necessary, the controls were given opportunity to decide which of the three types of record they wanted. When Mrs. Lee put one on without this preliminary consultation, it was usually rejected, and rejection was usually by stopping the machine. All this, of course, the medium's hands could easily have done; and indeed the believers would admit that they probably did it, under spirit guidance. This point I discuss in another place.

On one occasion, however, the motor was wound when the medium was clearly marked as in her seat. The handle was on the side away from her, and it seemed probable that from where she sat, she could not get hold of it, in such a way as to be able to turn it.

Toward the end we got trumpet voices on a

small scale and of weak character. The trumpet would be presented directly to a sitter, and the message given in a whisper that was quite inaudible to the others, and almost so to the one addressed. Sir Arthur heard in this way from his nephew Oscar Hornung, son of the author of "Raffles," who usually manages to "get through" in one way or another at any seance where his uncle is present.

After the sitting had passed through the major part of the lights stage, and before much had been done with the singing and whistling voices, we had a performance with the tambourines. The smaller of these had a spot of luminous paint at the center of one side. By virtue of this, one could follow its course as it travelled about, over the table and in and out among the heads of the sitters. While thus travelling, it played an accompaniment to the tune that was on the phonograph at the moment. One of the ladies remarked that she had never known that such good music could be got out of a tambourine, and I was inclined to agree with her. The tambourine and the lights both included, in their travels, the space above the center of the table, to which it was difficult to see how the medium could take them manually without getting tangled up in the lamps and arms of the chandelier. The tambourine performance was the most quickly over of any phase of the seance.

Those who have read the McKenzie report on

Miss Besinnet, either in the original as it appeared in the *Journal of the British College of Psychic Science*, or in my fragmentary abstract in the *Scientific American* of December, 1922, know that while this medium does not sit tied in the same sense as does Evan Powell, the ropes play a prominent part in her work. To those unacquainted with the McKenzie document or with Miss Besinnet I must explain this act on her bill. The control announces that the medium is to be tied by spirit operators; and after an interval of five or ten minutes, the red light is called for, and the sitters invited to inspect the result. The medium is found with both hands and both feet tied to the chair or to whatever else is convenient. She is supposed to have been tied in a manner that would have been impossible for her to accomplish, unaided; for while one hand and arm could have been tied by the other, the presumption is that the second arm could have been tied only with external assistance. The light is then put down again, and after another interval the control announces that the medium has been freed. Verification of this, with the red light turned on, concludes the rope-tying act.

McKenzie in his investigation ultimately found that this business was accomplished by means of a trick tie. He stated that the medium's right hand was tied, honestly and securely, by the left (or vice versa); and that the free wrist was then slipped into a skillfully pre-

pared noose in the rope, which could be so twisted about the wrist as to give the impression, under any save the most painstaking examination, of a proper and effective tie. When he discovered this, he did not charge the medium with conscious or even with subconscious trickery; he insisted rather that Black Cloud had been playing a trick on his own account, just to have a bit of sport with the investigators.

If the thing were a trick in 1922, I cannot testify that it was in 1923. Black Cloud announced that he was going to tie the medium, and the ropes were actually trailed across the hands of several of the sitters by way of a convincing touch. Then one could hear the whipping sounds as the ropes were passed around and drawn tight. When the job was completed the red light was called for and we were invited to inspect the work as completely as we cared to.

Before the tying commenced, Black Cloud had demanded "Big Chiefs change." This was interpreted by one of the ladies as a request that Sir Arthur and I exchange seats; and on being directly questioned, Black Cloud verified that this was what he wanted. We complied, and the tying proceeded. After there had been a good deal of whipping and other indications of what was going on, my left hand was located and picked up, presumably by the medium's left hand. It was carried into contact with her right, put neatly on top thereof, and most honestly and securely tied thereto—almost to the point of dis-

comfort. When the light came on, my freedom of examination was somewhat restricted by the bond between me and the medium; I could not pass around the medium to examine her left hand, with its bonds, from all sides.

This hand was tied to what I have already called the "runner" of the table. The rope had been passed several times about the runner, and several times about the medium's wrist. The wrist lay tightly upon the runner, with a large and apparently complicated knot in the rope between them. So far as I was able to ascertain by examination from my side and more or less across the medium's chest, no one loop of the rope went around both the wrist and the runner; every loop seemed to pass into the knot as it went from the wrist to the runner. And though I fingered the knot and the loops carefully, I could not discover that any of the loops was in the least degree loose, or that any two successive loops passed about her wrist. Neither of these observations, however, could be made with as much precision as I should have liked.

If we accept as accurate my observation that every loop of the rope about the medium's wrist was single, passing from the knot to the wrist and around the latter and immediately back to the knot again, with the same for the loops around the runner, it is not clear how there could have been any way of slipping her hand into or out of the loops after they were tied. It is equally difficult to see any way in which

she could have tied them, or twisted them so as to make them appear tied, after the insertion of her hand. With my control of her right hand, there was no escape from the necessity that the left hand was a one-hand job, or at most a job of one hand plus teeth, if it were done by the medium. With McKenzie's findings in mind, I thought I should have been able to identify the trick tie, if one were used. But on the other hand, McKenzie identified it only after having seen it repeatedly, and perhaps the more active suspicion which I felt would not be a sufficient advantage to lead to any better performance.

While the red light was on and the ties were being examined, Dr. Pyle produced a handkerchief and suggested that, before the medium was released, something be done with this as a clinching proof that her physical agency was not a necessary part of the phenomena. Black Cloud accepted the suggestion, the handkerchief was placed on the table as near the medium as possible, and the light extinguished. Almost at once the tinkle of a tambourine was heard, and Dr. Pyle stated that the handkerchief had been brought to him in this instrument, neatly folded. Before anyone had opportunity to wonder whether that were all Black Cloud had in mind, the tambourine with the handkerchief was gone; and in perhaps two minutes more the control called for the red light. The suggestion had been made that the handkerchief be knotted about the wrist of one of the sitters, and for a

moment we were at a loss to find it, as we glanced around the circle of wrists on the table.

Directly, however, someone located the missing kerchief—tied about the medium's mouth. My first thought was of her left hand, and I looked at it again. So far as I could judge, the rope was exactly as before. The extreme speed with which release and retying of this hand would have had to be accomplished, in view of the schedule outlined in the preceding paragraph, lends force to the argument that release and retying could hardly have been done. It also lends more doubt that these operations could have been carried out with such precision as to leave the ropes in what my eye would take for undisturbed condition.

Examination of the handkerchief came next, and was for the moment quite staggering. I could conduct this examination effectively, for the knot was on my side of her face. The handkerchief was smoothly and neatly folded as it passed about her mouth and around her cheeks. It was so tightly drawn that the flesh of her cheeks overflowed sharply at its edges; and when I forced my finger down inside the handkerchief, it was at the expense of the flesh rather than of the cloth. The ends were properly and firmly and unmistakably tied, a little to the right of the back of her neck.

I must confess that for the moment I was tremendously impressed. But subsequent thought brought one suggestion which would indicate

that the phenomenon is not quite so far beyond explanation on skeptical grounds as it might appear. Tight as it was, the handkerchief could undoubtedly have been pulled around, moving the knot from front to back or *vice versa*. If the medium had a free hand there seems no reason why the handkerchief could not have been tied, knot in front, with that hand and the teeth; then pulled around and tidied up a bit, with the knot in the position in which we found it. This theory could be partly tested out by feeling the knot carefully for traces of moisture; I doubt that it could be tied with the aid of the teeth, without something of this sort remaining. But unfortunately, the teeth suggestion is the result of subsequent thought, and not of the inspiration of the moment. Pending further opportunity to test it out, one can only say that it carries the handkerchief trick right back to the question of the freedom of the medium's left hand. Were it not for the McKenzie record, I dare say I should have testified rather strongly that it wasn't free. As it is, I simply don't know whether it was free.

The very obvious explanation of confederacy I am afraid will have to be thrown out. It is bad enough to be forced to endow the medium with the ability to see in the dark, without bestowing that ability upon any of the sitters; and in the bargain, it would have been practically impossible for any sitter to pass the phonograph, to reach across in front of it and tie the handkerchief, or to get past Sir Arthur and

myself. Coming up through the well in the table would have been a very chancey procedure, with my hand tied to the medium's right. And besides, while the medium has never given this handkerchief performance before, so far as I know, it is preposterous to explain it through confederacy unless we are willing to extend the same explanation to the rest of her stuff. We then come against the very inconvenient facts that everything else that she did for us on this evening, she duplicated for McKenzie in London and for Sir Arthur in Crowborough—in the one case with none of the present sitters, and in the other with none save Sir Arthur. No, if this medium does her stuff by trickery, she does the tricks herself.

After the extinction of the light upon the handkerchief-gagged medium, Black Cloud had an inspiration of his own. He called for a soft tune, and the whistling voice chimed in from the center of the table, in the usual manner. With the medium's hand tied to mine, I should have been willing to deny the possibility that her head was in the well; but I was spared the necessity. For her right hand moved off the table, carrying my left with it to her mouth. The avowed purpose was to enable me to verify that the handkerchief was still in place. But my hand was held, back against this handkerchief, long enough to enable me to make two other observations of prime importance. One was that the medium's head was unquestionably in the

place where it belonged, while the whistling came from the center of the table. The other was that while the whistling proceeded, the medium was breathing through her nose—gently, regularly, and *not* in time with the music. Upon the accuracy of this observation I am prepared to insist at all hazards; I unmistakably felt the exhalations from her nose, the warm air striking the side of my index finger, which lay close to the nostrils and far above the mouth. The fact that with the handkerchief over the mouth I should hardly have been able to feel the current of air from such gentle breathings as these, had they been from the mouth, does not in the least strengthen this very clean-cut observation in my own mind, but I set it down with the thought that it may strengthen it in the minds of my readers. Here, then, is something for the skeptic to crack—a real tough nut. I must confess I don't see how to crack it.

The suggestion, by the way, has been put forward that Miss Besinnet's independent voices are on her phonograph records, which she so religiously takes with her wherever she performs. If we pass over the facts regarding ventriloquism which I have brought out in preceding chapters, and the further fact that the sitters on all quarters of the circle hear these voices as from the center, and low down, this is a very natural plea. I am in the fortunate position of being able to meet it categorically. Some time ago Miss Besinnet held a series of test seances at

a place which shall be nameless. In her absence, one of the investigators, or all of them—I am not certain which—took the liberty of playing the records over. Nothing was found on them that did not belong there. Had I not known this, I should have asked for the privilege of replaying, after the present sitting, one of the tunes in connection with which the voices were heard.

By way of anti-climax, I suppose I ought to specify that after the test of the whistling voice, the medium (and incidentally, I) was released from the ropes, and handkerchief and rope deposited upon the table.

At various times throughout the seance, various of the sitters announced caresses or other contacts, on the backs of their hands or on their faces and heads. I felt both kinds, I think, as often as anybody. Once or twice I got very definitely the impression that my hand had been stroked by the fingers of a very small hand. This of course would prove nothing; such a hand, with an unsearched medium, could be artificial. More often the contact was not so definite.

It is the custom, when touched, to indicate the fact in some way. The more experienced sitters usually announce it by a "Thank you" addressed to the operators; those, like myself, who are not so hardened in seance technique, or not so convinced that there are real personalities involved distinct from that of the medium, are apt to make an announcement addressed rather

to the circle—"touched!" does about as well as anything else. Occasionally such an announcement brings the explanation that it was your neighbor who touched you or whom you touched. In the absence of this confession it is taken for granted that nobody else felt contact at the same time, and that the touch was therefore necessarily from the medium or from one of the undefined elements entering into the manifestations.

Always I was intent to observe whether action of any sort ever went on in two different parts of the room simultaneously. It is not easy to remember all the details or even all the major features of a two-hour performance having no plot. I am certain that two different voices were never heard at once, and that two objects were never moved about at the same time. I am under the impression that occasionally we had lights and voices simultaneously, but cannot state this with certainty.

At the beginning, before the medium had even gone into trance, those sitting directly opposite her felt the cold breeze so characteristic of many psychics. Shortly afterwards, and to the best of my recollection after the medium had "left" us and Pansy had come in, Sir Arthur and I got a very powerful blast of this. There could be no possibility of mistake here, nor any possible doubt that the wind came from the medium's direction.

Throughout the seance the medium displayed

a tendency to cough. Whenever she did this, Mrs. Lee would ask "Are you there, Ada?" The answer was usually "Yes." After a moment of this semi-emergence from the trance condition, Miss Besinnet would be eliminated again and the controls restored. Toward the end of the seance, when the strong materializations described below were occurring, the more experienced sitters spoke of the danger of the medium's going into a state of "deep trance." Whatever exactly that is, it is characterized by her face and body sagging forward on the table, and by clenching of her hands. At this time I was next her, and I was warned to keep her hand in mine and to watch for such clenching. At one moment, when one of the ladies thought she had heard evidences of the deep trance, I was requested to explore the space beside me and learn whether the medium had collapsed forward or was sitting erect. If she went into deep trance I was to remove her hand from the table and hold it tightly until she came out.

For a while toward the latter part of the sitting Pansy was present in better voice than before. Dr. Pyle took from his pocket a watch with luminous dial, on its fob; and asked her if she could carry it across the table to me. She did so, its path being easily discernible; it went high up among the lamps and arms of the chandelier, and descended safely upon our side, and quite accurately—but on Sir Arthur's hand instead of mine. Apprised of the error, Pansy

corrected it; then returned the watch by a most circuitous route to its owner.

At about the same time we had another remarkable demonstration. Now from one pile and now from another, now alone and now with the aid of the controls, Mrs. Lee had been feeding music into the phonograph. Of the records offered and rejected, some must have been restored to the "live" piles; else the supply would have been exhausted, so frequent were the rejections. Of those offered and accepted, some must have been restored to the "live" pile and some put on a dead pile; for some were repeated, once or several times, and others were not. In the original sorting, into the three groups, of the records that I had placed upon the table, Miss Besinnet certainly took them as they came, and piled them as she took them. She worked rather slowly, from which one might have got either the impression that she had to stop and think before knowing the classification of a record, or the impression that she was memorizing the order of the three piles that she was building up. Granting that by a feat of memory she might do this, it seemed certain that she could not have known the condition of the several piles at any time after the seance was well along. She might, quite conceivably, have recognized from the records played that we had got down to a point in one pile beyond any restored records, and then been able to name the next record, *in that pile*, by the feat of memory suggested.

This, however, seems to be all that can be conceded, and it does not cover what happened.

A record ran out; Mrs. Lee replaced it, without aid from the controls. They did not ask for any particular style of record, and Mrs. Lee did not indicate what style she had chosen. Before she had it completely on the machine, and necessarily therefore before it had played a note, Pansy spoke up and said she didn't want that one. Mrs. Lee, apparently with the viewpoint of giving Pansy a little good-natured raggng, asked her how she could tell whether she wanted it or not, when she hadn't waited to learn what it was. Pansy replied promptly and with a clarity of voice precluding all misunderstanding that she did know what it was; it was "The Tale of the Roses," and she didn't want it and wouldn't have it. It was laid aside for identification, when the light should be restored; and in order to be sure that it should be kept clear of confusion with any other record, Mrs. Lee placed it upright in her chair, against the back and behind herself. Presently, forgetting that it was there, she leaned against it and broke it in two. At the end of the seance, the broken record was examined and found to be the one that Pansy had named. This would be easily explicable upon the theory, suggested rather strongly by other elements of her seances, that Miss Besinnet can see in the dark. On any other basis, it comes perilously close to passing the bounds of telepathy and falling in the field of

pure divination; for on any other basis, nobody in the world knew or ever had known the identity of that record. Oh yes, one other reservation; we don't have to admit the good faith of Mrs. Lee if we don't want to. She might have spotted that record from the beginning, held it out for this act, and given the signal when she was about to use it.

The hypothesis that this medium really does, through some normal or supernormal means, see in the dark, has been seriously advanced by a competent investigator who has sat with her and believes her work to be entirely fraudulent, save in so far as the ability in question may be a psychic phenomenon itself. He bases his advocacy of this extraordinary hypothesis upon a phenomenon which was not seen at its best in the present seance, simply because all the sitters were too well-behaved to call it forth. The fact is, that at all times during Miss Besinnet's sittings, there are regions of the room into which it is admissible for the sitters to put their hands, and other regions into which their hands are not admitted. The slightest attempt to explore into the interdicted spaces results, before one has come in contact with anything, in one's hand's being seized and moved away. This seizure is made with the utmost precision, exactly as I might seize your hand in broad daylight if it were in my way. The investigator to whom I refer adopts the supernormal-vision theory as the easiest way to account for this precision of

knowledge and of action. In the seance of April 26th., it was displayed when my hand was wanted on the medium's; and the accuracy with which all physical contacts were made might again be recognized as a functioning of this same power.

Toward the end of the seance we had the finest example of table-tilting imaginable, and the first I had experienced, if we bar Evan Powell's performance of transferring a table from one place to another. Black Cloud announced what was coming, and instructed all the sitters to place their hands in contact with those of their neighbors, at the extreme edge of the table. My left hand, which was not covered by this order, was seized and placed upon the medium's right, not at the table's edge but well out in its middle. Knowing what was on the program, I kept my hand as lightly on hers as possible, in order not to offer any resistance to the table's rise; and twice, for my pains, I had my hand jammed down tighter on hers, by what I took to be her left hand. Further than these two contacts, there was nothing to indicate the position of this left hand of the medium; Mrs. Lee did *not* have it in analogy with my possession of the right.

We sat in silence for a moment or two, while the table gave a few premonitory shimmies. Immediately after these it rose, to the very certain judgment of all present, entirely clear of the floor, and probably to a height of eight or ten inches. Thus suspended in the air, it proceeded

to gyrate and rock in a curious up-and-down, back-and-forth fashion, which I can describe no better than to call it a figure-of-eight motion of the two sides of the table, the one going up while the other went down. This continued for some seconds, after which the table was gently eased down upon the floor.

I handled the table during the freeing of the rug, while we were setting up the properties; and while I paid no special attention to an estimate at the time, I and several others all found it none too easy to hold one end of it up while the carpet was worked out from beneath. To suppose that the medium could thus juggle it, with one arm otherwise engaged, from a sitting position at a very considerable distance from the table, even with her powerful build, struck me as preposterous.

The suggestion has been made—by one who wasn't there, of course—that only the top of the table was levitated. The top showed no tendency to come away from the legs while we were hauling the table about to free the rug; and besides, I don't believe that Dr. Pyle eats his meals off a magician's table. I have been asked how it could be that the table could be so strongly tipped, while levitated, without any of the legs' fouling any of the sitters; the answer, of course, is that the legs of the table are way off in the center, and that it would have to be tipped through a forty-five-degree angle before they would be in a position to foul anything beyond

the table's edge. This levitation act, next to the voices, was to me the most impressive feature of the evening.

It may not be out of order to remark here that I am unemotional in the presence of these phenomena, to what I conceive to be an extraordinarily cold-blooded degree. Of course, sudden noises in the dark and quiet room will startle me if they are loud enough, and touches have done the same thing; but they never get any further than this. My unemotion, I judge, is of a character and in a degree that would make me a very bad subject for the collective hallucination or auto-suggestion that are so freely advanced as the sum and substance of most physical phenomena of the seance room, to explain away things that cannot conveniently be explained in orthodox terms.

The grand climax of the Besinnet seances, spiritistically speaking, is the materialized faces. Here a word of explanation is in order. One critic poked the finger of scorn at this medium, because one of her materializations turned out to be Miss Besinnet herself, out of her seat and leaning far out over the table. Had he known a little more about the subject, he might still have poked the same finger of scorn, but from a different direction. It is admitted by the medium and her supporters that the "materializations" are not always independent of her own physical form. The claim is that when the "power is good" she gives off sufficient ecto-

plasm to form a complete face or even a full human figure; but that when the power is less, she can produce only enough of this substance to be used as a mask or veil, over the foundation supplied by her own face. Her face is then thought of as having been molded ectoplastically into a duplicate, more or less faithful, of the features which it is desired to present.

Now of course this seems ludicrous to the scoff-  
er—even the spiritualist ought to understand  
that, if he retains his balance. Maybe it is lu-  
dicrous; I don't know whether it is or not. It  
certainly has its humorous aspects. But it will  
never be demonstrated to be ludicrous by calling  
it so. The first man who talked about "splitting  
up" an electric current so that a lot of lights  
could be supported from one feed wire was re-  
garded as having perpetrated the prize joke of  
the decade; the only reason his critics could give  
for this verdict was their profound belief that  
this suggestion *was* ludicrous. So if you think  
this theory of materializations is ludicrous, all  
right. *But* please hunt up an honest-to-good-  
ness reason for your opinion; don't say it's lu-  
dicrous because materializations don't work that  
way, or you may find yourself in the same boat  
with the well-meaning folks who said that the  
electric current doesn't work that way. Until a  
specific reason for this absurdity is produced,  
Miss Besinnet's good faith cannot be criticized  
on the ground that her procedure and claims are  
absurd, or on the equivalent ground that her

materializations are, or might be, her own face in more or less disguise. So I shall not bother to discuss this possibility at all; I shall merely tell what I saw.

After the seance had been under way for half an hour or so, there occurred what the regular sitters recognized as an attempt at materialization. A psychic light was produced of different character from those that had gone before. It was more static and brighter, standing quietly in one place. A short distance away, in the direction of the left hand of the sitter facing it, there appeared a vague object of some sort, illuminated by the light. To me without prior knowledge of what it was supposed to be, the first of these objects was quite without form. They continued to occur, at intervals, with the light ever brighter and the luminous object ever better defined; until I was able to assure myself that it really was an attempt to delineate the human face.

The lights accompanying these faces were, at their best, of considerable illuminating power, once or twice actually making one of the sitters faintly visible to those in his immediate neighborhood. They were more definitely outlined than the moving lights, with a shape like a large flower bud—not as fat as a rose or peony bud, but, rather, longer than they were thick. The size would be about that of a very large cherry or very small plum. In the more brilliant examples there was a suggestion of form and struc-

ture, but this may have been an illusion from the very definite outline which these lights showed.

One who has sat with Miss Besinnet has expressed privately to me the opinion that these lights are from a small electric torch. They did not so impress me at the time—principally, I think, because the illuminated region did not show a definite circle; also, perhaps, because the luminous entity itself impressed me rather as a surface than as a curve, like the filament. But they do not last long, and one's attention is directed at the accompanying "face" more than at the light; so such a verdict should be put forward with reserve. Moreover, experiment with torches draped in colored tissue papers has indicated that their torch character can be thus concealed more effectively than I should have imagined. But this paper is fearfully noisy, and psychic lights are not.

The illuminated objects themselves, as I have said, ultimately get to the point where one believes, without borrowing the belief, that they are meant for faces. There the thing halted for some time. Sir Arthur, particularly, made desperate efforts to identify the materializees, asking to have them repeated, again and again. Ultimately he satisfied himself that one was his nephew, already mentioned, and another his mother. Sitting next him, I saw these particular apparitions almost as well as he did; and it was my best judgment that they were not suffi-

iently clear to be identified at all, save by a liberal contribution of desire and imagination on the part of the sitter.

Had some convulsion of nature cut the seance off a half hour prematurely, I should have carried this away as a final impression. During this last half-hour, however, I was forced to revise it; and this makes an interesting commentary upon the observations I have already set down, with regard to the progressive improvement of all the manifestations as a seance goes forward. From six to a dozen faces were presented within this period, either to me or to an immediate neighbor, which were startlingly clear and which lasted long enough for one to get them in one's eye. While all seemed in many ways to represent types rather than individuals, I was still pretty sure that if any were the face of one known to me, I should be able to recognize it—there are plenty of persons whose faces *are* types. Some of these more convincing exhibits were female and others male types. All, I believe, had the eyes closed; repeatedly a sitter would exclaim "If you would only open your eyes I believe I should recognize you." They were quite diverse, and I did not feel that they could all be the medium's face without make-up of some sort—ectoplastic or dress-goods, as you prefer! Yet in this verdict, I have the expert opinion of a very competent sculptor and student of facial types against me; she felt emphatically that all the faces presented

at a seance which she attended were the medium's, with no other disguise than muscular distortion, etc., etc. All those that I saw, I would reiterate, were to my best judgment extremely generalized in appearance—lacking entirely, for instance, such personality and character and distinction as I had noted in the singing voices. Herein, as I see it, lies the danger of claims of identification; herein, too, lies the severest criticism of the performance, as a performance. If the medium is a fraud, generality of type is exactly what she would aim at, in these faces, in the interest of promoting more "recognitions."

Concerning the structure or apparent structure of the faces, I should want to see more. Some if not all were surrounded by fabric-like structures similar to the "ectoplasmic arch" which Sir Arthur finds on most psychic photographs. As regards the features, my best impressions would be unfavorable to the suggestions involving the use of a textile fabric of some sort. All the faces were singularly reposeful in general effect, and I think it would be within the facts to say that all had some suggestion of the corpse appearance.

I am not certain whether Sir Arthur, later in the seance, got a more satisfactory presentation of Oscar or his mother than the ones which met my disapproval. I am under the impression that he did. He did, however, get, along toward the end of the seance, a written communication

alleged to be from his mother. No attempt was made to duplicate her hand-writing; this in fact is not believed necessary to the good faith of such messages. The content of the message was in no sense evidential. It stated that the face which he had thought to recognize as hers was hers in reality, and included in addition two or three of the usual spirit-message platitudes. The writing was much better executed than that of Iris (in the grocery-store seance), as regards the alinement of the margins and the trueness of the lines; but the penmanship itself was extremely poor—almost undecipherable, in fact. The procedure of writing and delivery were the same as with Iris, except that in the present case, pushed to it, the spiritualist could better afford to admit that the pen was handled by the human hand of Miss Besinnet.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A SLATE-WRITING SEANCE

**T**HERE was some general editorial business for me to transact in Chicago, so I went on there from Toledo with Sir Arthur and stayed two days. This brought it about that I got two seances which had not been on the original menu. One was with a young Chicagoan, apparently just finishing his high school. His friend—every medium has one, who does all his arranging for him—had got Sir Arthur's ear Saturday morning, and arranged for a sitting in the Doyle suite Saturday evening. The young man was a trumpet medium, solely and severely. To me the most interesting feature of the sitting was the struggle we had to attain absolute darkness.

We first attempted to sit in a room having four windows and two doors. We sealed these with blankets and newspapers until, as we thought, all light was excluded; then we went through the motions of opening the sitting. In five minutes, however, we could see everything in the room. We attacked the crannies through which the light was coming, and for a second time thought we had them mastered; but after a second interval our eyes again became sufficiently accustomed to the situation to give fair visibility when looking toward a window. Then

we adjourned to a bed-room, having but one window and one door. On the second trial here, we succeeded in really excluding the light. Had it been daytime, I doubt that even this attempt would have been effective.

Our medium had brought his trumpet along, together with a shallow tray. This was filled with water, placed in the center of the circle, and the trumpet stood on its large end in the water. The circle consisted of the Doyle family *in toto*—Sir Arthur, Lady Doyle, and the three children—with the medium's friend, the medium and myself. For the first time, I had the experience here of the medium's not going into trance of any description, but staying right with us throughout the seance, chatting and acting quite as any other member of the circle. Sitting, several of us on the bed and the others on large upholstered chairs, the circle was quite crowded and we had to be careful in our movements not to collide with the trumpet.

The results were of the sort that add nothing to one's existing convictions, if one has any. That is to say, if one of the sitters had had large experience sitting with fake trumpet mediums, he would inevitably have classed this young man with the fakes; while on the other hand Sir Arthur, having sat with numerous trumpet mediums of whose genuineness he has no doubt, in the natural course of events accepted this one as genuine, too. My own feelings were rather mixed; I think they would be

best described by saying that I felt the medium to be as genuine as the run of trumpet mediums, but that I did not know how genuine that was. That is to say, the performance was quite in line with trumpet performances as a whole, and one's only reaction would necessarily be to take it as one of the class in which it belonged. I did not know what that class was, and the conditions were such as to throw no light whatever upon this question.

The control was another American Indian—I have forgotten his name, and it doesn't seem to matter. We were told that his habit was to speak in a stentorian voice that would raise the roof if it were turned loose in the Auditorium Hotel, so as soon as the first indications of his presence were felt, we asked him, as a very special favor, to remember that we were not in our own wigwam and to moderate his tones. After doing this, his voice was prodigious enough for all uses. The medium has a particularly soft and mild voice, and Sir Arthur told a newspaper lady, next morning, quite categorically, that he couldn't have produced what we heard.

We sat for perhaps twenty minutes before anything happened. Finally the trumpet was heard to move about a very little in its tray. When the control at length began to talk clearly through the trumpet, he seemed to arrive all at once. The seance took the turn of a lecture by the control, subject to interrogations by the children and to less degree by Sir Arthur, about

his surroundings and circumstances in the Happy Hunting Ground. No attempt was made to get anything more evidential than this. Occasionally the trumpet touched one of the sitters, and I must say that when this occurred, it seemed to be floating free. The voice did not wander about the room, but kept the trumpet pretty closely at the center of the circle. As I have suggested, the physical side of the seance brought out nothing which could not have been done by the medium, from where he sat, if we grant that he could have produced the voice that we heard. Under the circumstances, I must confess that the sitting finally got to be a bore and I was relieved when Sir Arthur told the control that Mr. Bird was obliged to catch a train.

Thereby hangs a tale, and, in fact, all the rest of this chapter. There lives in a city which I shall identify no further than to call it Midwestburg, a slate writing medium of very large reputation, who earnestly shuns publicity. This city for which I have found so convenient an alias is not too far out of the way of one journeying from Chicago to New York. Sir Arthur had been there, and had seen the medium, Mrs. X., after my coming to Toledo had been definitely scheduled. He had got her consent, on general principles, to an informal sitting with me, at which he would be present or absent as circumstances might dictate. After we got to Chicago, he found that he did not have her address; and

on wiring to a gentleman in her city who had, we got a reply from this gentleman's wife that he was out of town and his immediate whereabouts unknown to her. We fairly burned up the wires between Chicago and Midwestburg for the rest of Friday and all Saturday morning, with the result that we ultimately located Mrs. X. and got an engagement for Sunday morning. Sir Arthur could not go; so I took another all-night ride, this time alone, and landed in Midwestburg just nicely in time to taxi out to the lady's residence and meet my engagement.

A word, first, about slate-writing in general. A double slate is used, hinged at the back to open and shut. A pencil is shut up inside this slate, and, under conditions more or less impressive and fraud-proof according to the identity of the medium, one awaits the production, presumably by this pencil and always on one of the inner surfaces of the slate, of a written message. When the slate is opened the message is found to be there. Obviously, if not a fraud, this is a physical phenomenon, in the same sense that telekinesis is and automatic writing is not.

I think it is fair and proper to say that the large majority of slate-writers are sleight-of-hand performers. A very wide variety of trick slates, with various styles of false backs, queer slides, false ends, etc., etc., is in existence; one book on the subject describes them by the score. Whether the message be spontaneous, or in response to a question asked or written, there is

wide scope for the perpetration of this sort of fraud; for in accordance with the rules of the psychic game, the slate is out of sight in the darkness at the moment when the writing is supposed to be produced. Some very surprising frauds have been recorded, under conditions which save to the most painstaking critic would seem to be quite fraud-proof.

The impression made upon me by the medium could not have been better. She is a very charming old lady—she has been writing on slates for more decades than she cares to count. She looks and acts exactly like somebody's grandmother. If she is a fraud, then there is absolutely no sense in believing anything creditable about any member of the human race. I cannot possibly exaggerate this factor. I do not mean to insist that on this ground her performance must necessarily have been genuine; I simply state, for what it may be worth, the best judgment of her character that I am able to make. I am even willing to set down the reservation that I have no data which would indicate whether my judgment in this direction is worth anything; I merely put down as a fact, that my whole sense of the fitness of things rebels at the idea of this lady's being a swindler.

She escorted me into her parlor, and we took seats at either side of a small table, perhaps three feet long and eighteen inches wide. She said that it was home-made; the statement was quite superfluous. I was able to find no hidden

shelves, false bottoms, or any other aids to trickery. It was hung on all four sides with a double thickness of rather thin cloth, which did not seem to be particularly impervious to light. This reached to the floor. Mrs. X explained that there was nothing like total darkness under the table, but simply a gloom which she had found sufficient for the work of her controls.

The *modus operandi* of this medium is to hold the slate beneath the table; and after the lapse of an indeterminate interval, one hears the pencil scratching merrily away. When this ceases, the slate is withdrawn, and on being opened it is found to have a message on it. For the purposes of this procedure, there is a slit in the cloth at either side of the table, sufficiently large for the slate to be thrust through. Emphatically, the space under the table must be anything but really dark when the medium's hand and arm are in this slit.

When the seance was over, I found that I had made a very serious error of omission. I had not realized that I should want anything more than my usual good, detailed memory of the various things that had happened, and my transcription of the messages. I found, on the contrary, that I required a very accurate knowledge of the sequence of events, from first to last. This I could just as well have made as the sitting went along—the medium and I were in broad daylight. I didn't; and as a result I missed what might have been an opportunity to

come pretty close to establishing this mediumship as genuine, beyond all reasonable doubt; and what might equally have been an opportunity to cast the gravest doubts upon it. One has to have a good deal of experience in this sort of thing, before one is really ready to meet all the unexpected turns which a seance may take.

Mrs. X. started by asking me to examine the two slates with which she was to work. I found nothing at all out of the way with them. She took her seat, and held one of them, with its pencil inside it, under the table, as indicated. For upwards of half an hour nothing happened. Finally the pencil began to scratch, and this continued long enough, apparently, for quite a message to be written. Then the medium withdrew the slate and opened it; and sure enough, both inner panels were covered with writing.

I found the penmanship extremely difficult to read. Mrs. X. suggested that, to save time, she would read it to me. For the same purpose, she waited until the next slate was under the table; then she read me the first one. There was no imposition upon me here as regards the penmanship. It was simply a poor hand, to which Mrs. X. was accustomed and I was not. After she had read it, I could see quite well, without any possibility that I was the victim of suggestion, that it said what she represented it to say.

The procedure outlined here was followed throughout; and objection might be entered to it, on this ground. While the medium was read-

ing to me the message on the last slate, I was not able to give my undivided attention to what she was doing, if anything, under the table. If the messages were produced through trickery, this was doubtless the time at which the trick was executed; the scratching of the pencil at a later moment would then be merely a blind. At the same time, I was able to give her a good deal of attention, and I must say that I detected nothing at all suspicious.

The first slate contained the following message: "Good morning, my own good friend. A greeting to you from the spirit world. Your loved ones are very close to you (almost necessarily this was in large part a miss, as my account of my sitting with Mrs. Leonard will make clear). They will keep you under good influences. The one who came was the one you hoped for."

I suppose I may as well confess that this last statement was a hit, to the extent that, all the way out to Mrs. X.'s house and throughout the tedious wait for the "spirits" to get into action, I was quite unable to dismiss from my mind the very specific thought of a very specific deceased relative. It would not really be fair to charge me with having "hoped for" his appearance; the facts are simply as stated—he kept running through my mind. But if he were there, why this fearfully vague reference to him?

The general greeting having been got out of the way, Mrs. X. asked me to write a question

on a little pad, and to fold the sheet up and drop it into the space beneath the table. The pad was not a trick pad, such as is so often used in public performances that revolve about questions written by members of the audience. After I tore off the sheet with the message the rest of the pad remained on the table, untouched and unexamined by Mrs. X. There is of course the possibility that the medium might have read the message while I was writing it. My writing, however, is not such as strongly to support this theory; the word "scrawl" might fairly be used to characterize it.

My harmless looking question, "What can you tell me of my maturing obligations?" was in reality a bit of a test. These obligations consisted of a \$500 payment which was to fall due on July 1st, on the mortgage on my house. At the moment of the seance, there stood to my credit, on the books of a New York philatelic auction house, more than enough to meet this payment. This credit was subject to draft just as freely as it would have been subject to check had it been in my bank. I don't suppose anybody ever had greater knowledge of exactly where the money was coming from to meet a maturing obligation than I had at this moment.

My purpose in asking the question was not to deceive or trip. It seemed to me that, if I asked this question of one who was not familiar with all the circumstances, a logical inference might be drawn that I was, to some degree at least,

worried about my indebtedness—if I were not, why should I ask the question? So I put the question, in exactly the form quoted, in the hope of learning exactly how much the answering intelligence knew about my affairs. The answer was as I rather anticipated—a general and soothing assurance that the indebtedness would be met, and *an exhortation not to worry about it*. But the curious thing was that this answer was not given by the slate.

Mrs. X. is clairvoyant as well as slate-writing. While the slate on which, presumably, the answer to my question would appear, was being held under the table, she began to describe a spirit which she saw hovering about me. Some of the characteristics were emphatically those of the relative who had been so on my mind; others were emphatically not his; in all, I should say that, referred to him, the clean hits and the clean misses were about an even split. The answer to my question was delivered orally by Mrs. X., as a message from this spirit. Incidentally, she used the words "maturing obligations," indicating, by fair means or foul, a very precise knowledge of the question.

She asked for another question, and I wrote "What can you tell me about my health, with special reference to the thing that has been causing me some concern?" There was no hidden test here; the question had only its face value. I got both a spoken and a written reply here, the latter being the second slate message—

the first since the opening greeting. Both were rather general in their terms, save that the written one contained the statement that my weakness is functional and not at all organic. If my own guess is any good at all, this was a bullseye. The thought in my mind, which it so well hits off, had to do with a condition of which there is no visible surface indication. At the same time, it is a reassurance which would be welcomed by many people—by most people, in fact, who would be moved to ask the question which I had asked. To this extent it is unconvincing.

First and last, I suppose there were a dozen slates-full of written messages presented. I shall not weary the reader with a recital of all these; most of them were frightfully general. One of them was signed "Grandmother." On the plea that I wanted to check up the penmanship and see whether by any chance it *was* that of my grandmother, I persuaded Mrs. X. to give me this slate. I still have it, with the original message on it; and I have had a good deal of fun flashing it on people who were eager to explain to me just how I had been fooled by a trick slate. There simply isn't any trick about this slate; and the presence of the message on it disposes of the last chance, that a slide might have been used. Whatever else this medium may have done to me, she didn't fool me with a trick slate. Nor were the messages previously prepared in disappearing ink; for each slate was subjected to repeated cleaning and reuse.

Twice she attempted to give me absolute proof that there was no fraud. The first time, after the pencil had begun to scratch she had me take hold of the slate, through the slit in the cloth on my side, and hold on until a curious little jerk of the slate was felt which signified that the message was complete. Then she withdrew the slate, and sure enough the message was on the inside, just as always. But, of course, there was no proof that the message had been made when it was supposed to have been made, or that she had not very dexterously turned the slate inside out after I released it.

The next time, she met at least one of these points. She had me hold the slate with her from before the time when the scratching began (but not from the moment the slate went under the table), until it finished; then she relinquished her hold, and I withdrew it myself. The message was on the inside; leaving no alternative save that the phenomenon was genuine, or that the message had been written *and the slate turned* before my hand was introduced. This would be a pretty large order, especially with the loose pencil to take care of; but I will not insist that it couldn't be done, I will merely say that I don't see how it could be done. It is, perhaps, significant that no offer was made to permit me to put the slate under the table myself; to have the medium *only then* reach in from her side and grasp it; and to have me retain my hold until the message had been completed, and

then withdraw the slate myself. I think even the most rancorous skeptic would be convinced by this test; and I think the medium's most enthusiastic supporter will at least wonder why, when tests involving my handling of the slate were being attempted, this one was avoided. But I must reiterate that I do not see how the medium could have handled the slate as she would have had to handle it to produce her results fraudulently.

I have one further suspicious circumstance to chronicle. The medium's son was in the house when I arrived. He went out shortly after the sitting commenced. Twice during the sitting the telephone rang, and the medium went to answer it. The first time, she left the door open and it was plain from what she said into the instrument that she had been expecting the call. The second time, she closed the door and I could not hear what she said; and in the bargain, she left me holding the slate under the table in her stead. It was obvious that nothing would be written on it while she was out, but she said something about not interrupting the flow of the force. She was gone for about ten minutes, which seemed to me excessive for a phone conversation, and quite time enough for the force to get discouraged and quit. I could not help wondering whether the leaving of the slate in my charge under the table were a ruse to tie me to the table. It will be understood that the slate is not rested upon the floor, or upon any-

thing under the table, but must be actively supported by the hand and wrist. By the time she came back, my wrist was a wreck and the slate weighed about two tons. I wondered again whether *her* wrist were of steel, or whether my sensations might be taken as suggesting that she really didn't support the slate as she was supposed to. It's no joke, holding that slate horizontally by one edge, while the far edge pulls down with all the leverage which its distance gives it; and the thought of Mrs. X. doing this for that preliminary half-hour fairly staggered me. The whole telephone incident left a bad taste—not the least feature of which was the fact that the medium was left alone in the house while sitting, with a call expected.

It is in this connection that my failure to make a chronological summary of the sitting hurts most. Along in the middle of the seance, I was requested to drop my handkerchief into the space beneath the table. No reason having been given for this, I complied and promptly forgot all about it. Half an hour or more later, I was instructed by a message on the slate to salvage that handkerchief. I found it very handsomely tied into a complicated wreath—by the spirits, of course; the slate claimed this specifically. But—here's the rub; I don't know whether the medium was out of the room during the period when the handkerchief was under the table! I think it may safely be assumed that if she is a trickster, she could have got possession

of the handkerchief without my knowledge. I am quite certain that she couldn't have tied it as it was tied, in my presence, without my catching on. So if she is on the level, those telephone calls cost her a very handsome testimonial.

I shall anticipate my final chapter here, by setting down something that is really more or less in the nature of a general conclusion. The three most studied efforts made in my presence, by three different mediums, to produce something absolutely evidential, were Powell's thread tie, Miss Besinnet's stunt of tying the handkerchief across her mouth, and this slate-writing seance, with my holding of the slates and the knotting of my handkerchief. I wonder just how much significance is to be attached to the fact that all these attempts left a loophole? The loophole in the Besinnet case is a small one, to be sure, and depends entirely upon prior knowledge of McKenzie's findings; but with that knowledge, it exists. In the Powell case as in the present one, even if the suspicious circumstance be given the worst interpretation, there is no certainty that the results observed could have been attained by fraud. But in each case the loophole is there.

In the case of Mrs. X., I can state categorically that she did not learn the content of my questions by taking them out of the room with her; she had answered at least two of them before the first 'phone call. On this occasion she was in her own house, and presumably could

have had a trap door under the table with a confederate downstairs; but she has sat in plenty of places where this would have been quite out of the question. Besides, I looked for a patch in the carpet and found none.

At one stage of the proceedings, I wrote a question something like this: "Can you give me the name that I have in mind, in connection with my vacation trip of last year?" The answering intelligence refused to attempt this, explaining that it wasn't a fair question. He could give me names connected with that trip, but could have no assurance regarding the one I had in mind. That was plausible enough, and might even be taken as lending some discredit to the theory of telepathy—if only he had gone on, and volunteered one such name. But this very natural thing he failed to attempt. Why?

As I read this chapter over in proof, it seems more severe than my impressions of Mrs. X's mediumship warrant. I have done her an injustice if my conscientious statement of all the grounds for doubting her has obscured the fact that her performance was very impressive indeed. Throwing away completely the consideration of her favorable personality, I find it just as hard to explain all that she did as due to fraud, as to accept the possibility that what she did can be done genuinely.

## CHAPTER XVII

### REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

THE brief accounts of my European expedition and its American supplement which I wrote for serial publication in the *Scientific American* brought to my desk hundreds of letters of comment and inquiry. The one point mentioned more often than any other in these was the fact that I did not make any statement of my conclusions, either in general or with reference to particular mediums. Some correspondents were irritated by this, some thought I was intentionally dodging the issue—one man actually wrote for no other purpose than to express a sort of left-handed admiration of the skill with which, as he saw it, I had maintained my non-committal balance on a very precarious fence. Whether annoyed or tickled or merely curious to learn what I really believed, all these correspondents missed the main point. This point is emphasized, in the present volume, by the choice of the word “adventure” for the title, rather than “investigation” or “experiences.”

Anybody who expects me to have, as a result of the seances described here, any fixed conviction regarding psychic phenomena in general, or even any categorical opinions about the mediums with whom I sat, overlooks the character of my expedition. There was no expectation

that I should bring away from these adventures any general conclusions. It was realized in advance that the conditions of my seances, and particularly my lack of control over these conditions, would not be such as to justify the formation of anything more than the most provisional opinions. But in one important respect this expectation was surpassed, and I came home with a very profound and categorical conviction.

Regarding the occurrence of objective psychic phenomena there have been three broad opinions. It has been maintained that they occur objectively and in good faith, through the operation of some cause, unidentified or provisionally identified, other than mediumistic fraud. It has been maintained that they occur objectively, but only as the result of sleight of hand, confederacy, or other fraud on the part of the medium—in other words, that physical mediumship is necessarily fraudulent. And it has been maintained that they do not occur objectively at all, but that their apparent occurrence is the result of collective hallucination of some sort.

It is of course admitted that mediumistic fraud occurs in specific cases. Equally, it is admitted that hallucination and hypnosis occur in sporadic instances. But this is aside from the mark; I speak here of general hypotheses, advanced to account for all psychic phenomena of apparently objective character, in complete generality. Every hypothesis that has ever been

advanced for this purpose, I believe, falls cleanly in one or another of the three groups defined.

On the basis of the experiences described in this book, I am prepared to dismiss the third alternative as a generality, and to restrict it to very special cases. When advanced as a generality, it is based upon a total misconception of the course of events in the seance room. Its advocate pictures a highly emotional group sitting under highly emotional conditions, with nerves at the breaking point and every sense strained at or beyond its limit. He pictures phenomena which are either on the very threshold of insensibility and as to whose exact nature he maintains a discreet silence, or else phenomena that owe whatever of physical basis they possess to the fact that a number of people cannot for long remain in complete silence and completely motionless. He pictures the sitters as seizing upon every pretext for supposing that the spirits have moved or spoken in the room, as exaggerating the infinitesimal sounds and sights in question, and finally as having persuaded themselves and one another that something has been seen and heard, which has really had no independent occurrence. The fact is, this is all totally at variance with the clean-cut attitude of the sitters and the clean-cut character of the phenomena at all my seances. Certainly no rational person could duplicate my experience without duplicating this conclusion. The absolute evidence afforded in the Powell sitting that

the several objects had been moved, and in various British College seances by the photographing of psychic lights, may aid some of my readers in following me here; but in my own mind this absolute proof has little if any more weight than the more general considerations of the behavior of the sitters and the impression made upon me by the phenomena.

The more daring theory has been put forward that the entire group may be collectively hypnotized by the medium, and may in this way be induced to accept as objective a group of phenomena not having even the tenuous physical foundation indicated in the preceding paragraph. Collective hypnosis is a very tasty mouthful; but I have yet to find anybody who knows anything about hypnotism, and who is of the opinion that it is possible in such a way or on such a scale as is here involved. Its one merit lies in its easy explanation of the fact that certain mediums, ordinarily brilliantly successful, find that in the presence of certain particular sitters they can get no results at all. Such inhibitors, under this hypothesis, would be merely people whom the medium is unable to hypnotize.

Notable apparent support for the theory of collective hypnosis is got by citing the Hindoo fakirs and the wonderful tricks which they are alleged to perform. Some of these, if correctly reported, would almost demand the collective hypnosis explanation. But anybody who has

ever made an earnest effort to track down an actual eye-witness of the trick of the boy who vanishes by climbing a rope thrown into the air, knows that the authenticity of such tricks is highly problematical; and he also knows that, if they are ever done at all, it is to a small audience of two or three people, and under the most carefully controlled conditions. This is quite another matter from the hypnotizing of a group of a dozen people, *in the dark*, by one person.

Even if we were to accept the doubtful doctrine that a large group can thus be hypnotized by one operator, we meet difficulties. Hypnosis leaves the subject without memory of what occurs during subjection. Of course he can be hypnotized to do a given act at a given time after he regains his senses; and he could presumably be hypnotized in the same way to have a given memory of something that had or had not happened. But this would hardly suffice. When the post-hypnotic suggestion is carried out, the victim is conscious that he isn't doing it because he really wants to, that he doesn't want to do it and doesn't know why he is doing it, that the impulse to do it is a mysterious urge quite distinct from his own ordinary impulses. Presumably a post-hypnotic recollection would in some analogous way stand out from one's normal memories.

Quite opposed to this conclusion, one's memory of a seance seems in every respect like one's memory of any other complex sequence of events

occupying a comparable time. It reveals no abnormal or puzzling features whatever. One recalls new details and loses old ones; one discusses the seance with another sitter and disagrees with him in regard to some details, while in regard to others one permits his memory to correct one's own, with consciousness that the correction is in accordance with the facts; one asks or is asked questions that focus one's mind on details not previously in one's consciousness —in every respect one's recollection of the seance is subject to the normal flux and normal uncertainty of memory. That all this could be achieved simultaneously in a dozen people by hypnosis is quite unthinkable.

No: as generalizations, all hypotheses of hallucination and hypnosis are inadequate; the phenomena are truly objective. This simplifies the matter greatly, and in particular it leaves us with a far more clean-cut issue between fraud and genuineness than we ever had in the presence of any such middle-of-the-road alternative as afforded by the various delusion hypotheses. The phenomena occur. Whether they occur through unknown powers or through fraud is a question for the investigator to attack. He must attack it quite afresh for his every medium, until he has sat with enough mediums to give data of sufficient volume to justify an attempt at a general formulation. But whether fraudulently or genuinely, that the trumpet actually

speaks and the furniture moves and the psychic lights glow, he need not question.

There are a few common features of all seances which may be isolated and commented upon before we consider the major question of genuineness. One has to do with a rather critical question of operating technique. We do not believe, in any event, whatever the phenomena produced and whatever the explanation advanced, that we are dealing with black magic. Whatever the causes or agencies at work, they work through natural laws of some sort—when we speak of supernormal or psychic phenomena, we merely convey the admission that the particular laws involved have not yet become a part of our organized knowledge. When objects move or sounds are heard, it therefore is in order to ask, first of all: what is the immediate agency causing the motion?

If the medium is a trickster, we expect to find that this immediate agent is his hand or foot or throat. In the early days of psychic research, if it *was* found that his hand or foot or throat had been thus involved, he was dismissed off-hand as a fraud. Today I think even the skeptic, if he be fairminded, will agree that this may be a little hasty. For suppose that the medium's subconsciousness, or the subconsciousness of one of the sitters, or the consciousness of some departed spirit, or even God himself, or any other cause you prefer, is present in the room and about to stimulate execution of some objective

manifestation in the course of which a hand is required. The medium is under the control of this extraneous personality or extraneous cause, and the medium has a hand; and I, for one, would rather believe that the medium's hand may be used, without the medium's knowledge, than that a hand can be manufactured out of nothing and used in its stead.

The case seems really quite analogous with automatic writing. This unquestionably is done in good faith, though there is no immediate test which may be employd to determine whether in a given instance it is in good faith or not. Why may not the automatism be just as honest when the action is that of lifting a table, moving a vase, tying a rope, or delivering a spoken message, as when it is that of writing on a bit of paper? I believe it may.

But what, then, are we to do to distinguish true automism from trickery? In automatic writing we have the text of the messages, which sooner or later will enable us to do this. But there seems no sure way of distinguishing between the conscious moving of the table by the medium, and its moving without his consciousness through an identical motion of his hand. The problem looks like a very nasty one; but, at least for our present purposes, its solution is easy. If the table was moved with the medium's hand, whether fraudulently or otherwise, we have no *objective* psychic phenomena at all. Its objectivity is quite normal; its psychic side,

if existent, is *subjective*, in exactly the same sense that automatic writing is subjective though it leaves the objective record of the written message. So, without touching the difficult problem of genuineness at all, we may reject these phenomena on the ground that if they are of psychic origin, they are subjective, and reserved for future treatment by the remarks of page 29.

The major issue having been nailed down, by the withdrawal of the hallucination theory, to the question of fraud vs. genuine mediumship, it becomes pertinent to revive another old bone of contention. Some investigators have taken the stand that once they catch a medium in fraud, they will work with him no more. Others modify this to the extent of assuming that genuine mediumship and trickery are not necessarily incompatible, and insisting that each case of fraud be dealt with on its merits.

If we were investigating mediums and mediums only, the first would be the only permissible viewpoint! But we aren't. We are investigating phenomena. Of course, a medium who is known to have resorted to trickery must be more acutely suspected than one not known to have cheated. But to throw out a medium who has ever given a performance that remains unexplained, simply because that medium has given other performances at which he cheated, is a most reckless procedure. The unexplained performance loses some of its presumption of validity in the face of the fraudulent one, but

until it is proven to have been itself fraudulent it ought to remain as part of the data of psychic research.

I think this attitude would be more generally taken if the psychology of mediumship were a little better understood, so that, assuming genuine mediumship to exist, the possibility of a genuine medium's cheating on occasion were better appreciated. The medium works under conditions which have not been exactly defined, and he utilizes a power (under the assumption just made) which we do not at all understand. With both the power and the conditions so uncertain, his performance is bound to be uncertain too—sometimes he gets brilliant results and sometimes he gets practically nothing. But whether he sits for convinced spiritists or for investigators, he is under the constant urge to deliver the goods. It would, I think, call for a much larger intellect than that of the average medium, to resist at all times under these circumstances the opportunities that arise for playing this, that, or the other little trick to help along the reluctant phenomena. If physical mediumship is ever genuine, we shall some day have assurance to this effect; in the meantime, the investigator may be doing both himself and his subject a grave injustice when he demands of his medium a standard of honesty very materially above the general average of the race as a whole. It is *not* an absurdity to speak of an honest deed by one who has been known

to do a dishonest one. It is *not* an absurdity to speak of a seance as in part fraudulent and in part perhaps genuine, or to speculate just how much may with certainty be attributed to fraud. Particularly large, in my judgment, is the possibility that a genuine subjective medium (we do not have to assume that such exist, we know they do) may attempt the fraudulent production of physical effects to go with his legitimate repertoire.

In all my seances that gave any scope for it, there was observable the most amazing precision of movement in the dark. Powell, Besinnet, Sloan, even the circus sitting above the grocery store—all displayed this feature strongly. Objects of various sorts fly about the room at high velocities, weaving their way among the arms of chandeliers and among the arms and heads of the sitters, with never a collision. Whatever the immediate physical agency that supports and moves these—whether actually the medium's arms, or ectoplasmic extensions from the medium's anatomy, or what not—these too travel noiselessly and with precision wherever they have to go.

The very smallest assumption that I can make regarding this sort of thing is that it is done by one of the sitters who, by abnormal vision or other means, is able to locate objects in the dark as rapidly and as accurately as you and I locate them in the light. There is no hesitation or exploring, no fumbling; accidental con-

tact is never made with the heads or hands or feet of the sitters, and intentional contact is firm and accurate; and there is never the least bit of rustling, shuffling, breathing or other indication that anybody is moving about the room. More than any other feature of seances as I have observed them, this needs explanation. I may say, indeed, that I have sat with a medium who was found to be fraudulent, and the record of whose "successes" would indicate that he must be a pretty high-grade fraud; and his performance in the respect here emphasized was distinctly inferior to that of Powell, of Sloan even, of the grocery circle, and of Miss Besinnet. The operator in question devoted sometimes as much as an hour, at the beginning of the seance, to careful exploration of the room with the trumpet, and it was not until he had completed this rather bungling process and formed a mental map of all the sitters and all the objects in the room, that phenomena of any account which he could not have produced from his chair occurred. This is in striking contrast to the seances which I describe in this volume, in which a high level of performance was struck from the beginning. I will confess with the utmost frankness that though I have known a blind man who travelled daily on the New York Subway without giving the average passenger any inkling of his lack of vision, and who was perfectly at home anywhere on the campus of Columbia University, I am completely at a loss

for any normal explanation of this feature of my seances.

I have set forth the impossibility and the impropriety of attempting any general conclusions of a definite character on the meager basis of the seances which I have had. At the same time, I should be quite impervious to contacts from without, quite insulated against the acquisition of new ideas, if these seances had not left me with what I may call a sum total of impressions. This I must put forward with several emphatic reservations. It does not represent any hard and fast opinion on behalf of which I should be willing to argue. It is in no sense a definite conclusion or a scientific judgment or even a scientifically-arrived-at opinion. It is admittedly formed without adequate data. But if one has any data at all, however inadequate, one must be capable of judging in what direction they point. Such a judgment would necessarily be in a state of flux, subject to modification by every further bit of data subsequently obtained. Subject to all this reservation —call it hedging if you want to—my present state of mind is about this:

Of all the physical phenomena which I have witnessed, there are many for whose fraudulent production, under the given conditions, I can without serious difficulty see a way. There are many more for whose production by fraud I can still see a way, but only with serious difficulty—that is to say, so far as I can see, to ac-

count for them in this fashion one would have to make assumptions so far-fetched that the question would arise whether they were not more objectionable than the outright hypothesis that some psychic force was at work. And finally there are many for whose fraudulent production, under the given conditions, I can conceive *no possible way*. It is understood that I do not know all there is to know about fraud and sleight of hand. But making due allowance for this, it is my best judgment that, of physical manifestations which baffled me altogether or forced me to make objectionable assumptions in the effort to explain them as due to fraud, I have seen enough to establish a good degree of probability that some of them were genuine psychic phenomena.

Powell, in spite of the failure of the critical test, was the most convincing of all my mediums. It will emphasize well the tentative character of the conclusion just expressed, when I say that if Powell were demonstrated to be a fraud, I should be inclined to reverse the verdict and regard the probabilities as against my having seen genuine phenomena. To put the same thing differently, I am prepared to listen to argument on Powell, and if you can show me how Powell's results could have been obtained through fraud, I will grant that all else I have seen could presumably be so obtained, too.

Next to Powell, I hardly know whether to place Miss Besinnet or Mrs. X. The Toledo

medium is perhaps the more finished, but Mrs. X's manifestations I suppose are intrinsically the more surprising. Hope would come next. Sloan's mediumship is not preeminently physical and would not stand on its own legs if unsupported by the work of his betters. Frau Vollhard is even less satisfactory.

The Kluski casts would rank ahead of Powell, even, if one had been present when some of them were made. Even as they are, they constitute a formidable exhibit, and one which has weighed heavily in my balancing of probabilities. If objective psychic phenomena really occur, we can't go on forever refusing to accept them on authority! There must come a point after which we shall no longer properly insist that every medium perform for every observer—just as we all admit that the earth is round and travels about the sun, though precious few of us have ever proved or even observed these facts for ourselves. I do not see how anyone can give the Kluski shells serious consideration without coming to realize that the psychic claims rest upon a formidable foundation.

Having weighed the probabilities with respect to occurrence or non-occurrence of the physical phenomena, I suppose I ought to go on and weigh the probabilities with respect to causes. All the reservations set down in the previous case apply here. And here I must admit—not, I hope, any less of an open mind than on the question of occurrence, but more of a personal

preference for a particular type of explanation. It does not make the least difference to me, emotionally, whether these things *occur* or not. If they *do* occur, however, it does make a difference to me emotionally through what agency they occur. It was Dr. Gardner Murphy who first called my preference here "emotional," and I have used the term to describe it ever since. This emotional preference is against any explanation involving the action, on this sphere, of departed humans. I have no emotional preference against survival, but merely against the idea that those who survive can come back and produce physical effects upon our physical plane. I believe that this preference would not blind me to any adverse facts that might present themselves, or prevent me from giving a fair hearing to all the evidence. But that I have it I must confess.

Doing all I can to discount this preference, I still am unable to find that anything whatever has occurred in my presence that is in the least degree demonstrative of survival and communication and activity on the physical plane by deceased humans. It seems to me that my sitting with Mrs. Leonard actually presents a number of rather forceful indications that, *in this instance*, no such factor was at work; but the restriction of the italicized words must of course be insisted on. Beyond this one seance, I must say that I find nothing in my experiences which, of itself, would constitute very strong evidence

against the spirit hypothesis. But bringing all my experience together, I regard the probabilities, so far as they are here displayed, as overwhelmingly in favor of some other explanation for whatever psychic phenomena, subjective and objective alike, may occur. As to what such an explanation might look like, I find that my own independent speculation is not so very far from that put forward by Dr. Geley in the November, 1923, issue of the *Scientific American*.

Let us start from the thesis that telepathy is demonstrated to occur. It is not then a matter of black magic; there must be some perfectly definite externalization of the energy of the human brain, which crosses space and produces an effect in another brain. Presumably we shall get it as well formulated and as well understood, some day, as the light wave and the electric current and the Hertzian wave are today understood and formulated. Now with regard to the light wave to which our eyes are so wonderfully and providentially sensitive, we do not find it at all a matter of surprise that there exist other potential receivers, so that the light by means of which we see will also affect the photographic plate, the paint on our houses, the temperature and size of a bit of rock or glass, and the electrical resistance of a bit of selenium. Why, then, may it not come to be just as understandable and just as much a matter of course that the energy which I have pictured as projected from the human brain, may

have potential receivers other than another human brain, and may exert physical effects upon such receivers?

There is the emotional preference which may distort my viewpoint here. But I think that I am not bowing to this preference when I say that some such explanation as this, involving the externalization in objective form of the energy which the brain puts into conscious or subconscious processes of thought, is far less of a departure from current scientific doctrine, and is therefore provisionally more worthy of attention, than the explanation that involves the action in the physical realm of humans who have left the physical behind them. Incidentally, it steals from the spiritists the one advantage which they have hitherto possessed—a single explanation for *all* psychic phenomena, of whatever sort. And it is at least worthy of passing note that under such an explanation, psychic photography is quite as respectable and quite as credible as any other physical phenomenon, instead of constituting the black sheep of the psychic family.

Is it necessary for me to remind my readers that this suggestion is put forward, not at all as a scientific deduction from my psychic experiences, but merely as a very provisional estimate of the probable cause of some phenomena concerning whose probable occurrence I have, with much hesitation and reserve, rendered a provisional affirmative opinion?